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MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

by

W. H. HUDSON

WITH NOTES, SOME LETTERS, AND AN INTRODUCTION

by

MORLEY ROBERTS



LONDON

JONATHAN CAPE 30 BEDFORD SQUARE

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS



## INTRODUCTION

THERE is little need for an introduction to this batch of Hudson's letters, for the assumption that most who read this book have at least looked at its predecessor may be pardoned. Their order in time is often doubtful, for Hudson usually put no more than the day of the month and I did not preserve the covers. Some dates are therefore guess-work, though many letters show by their allusions when they were written. It will be obvious that this correspondence has in it very great gaps. Although Hudson and I wrote to each other from the beginning of our friendship in 1880 I did not keep anything he wrote till much later. This I regret the more as he often spoke of his earlier books. As *The Naturalist in La Plata* was so long in progress and presented so many points of controversy there were naturally many letters about it, especially on points of instinct, such as the questions of the red rag and the bull and the ways of wild and tame horses. It would, indeed, be impossible to name a tenth of the subjects about which we wrote, for they ran from the mightiest mammals to the mosquito, from forest trees to the evening primrose, from the habits of the Patagonian Indians to those, shall I say, of politicians and publishers. Unluckily none of these early letters survives, for the earliest printed here were written a little before the publication of *Birds in London*, when we were much together and had no need to correspond at length, although it was about then that I began to keep all that he did write. Especially do I regret the loss of those he sent to me when I was in Western America as they not only spoke of his work but of his continued struggles for a bare living and his friendship for George Gissing, with whom I made him acquainted in the

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'eighties. There is a passage in my own first book in which I describe making a fire 'with the aid of a letter from a friend in London.' This I believe was from Hudson. I have by no means printed everything, for some scores of letters would have no interest even to his most devoted followers, and some have been destroyed or reserved for special reasons. Certainly nothing is printed here which the writer would have wished left out.

Perhaps it is necessary to apologize for printing a few of my own letters. It has always seemed to me a pity that most books of this kind are necessarily one-sided. We seldom see what provoked a letter or how it was answered when it is obvious that the following one is a rejoinder. I often wrote copiously to Hudson in answer to many of these letters and, as it happens, some of my replies have been preserved in old shorthand books. These have been again transcribed and I have used such as seemed likely to throw more light on the subjects discussed than any commentary which could now be furnished. If they have value it lies in the fact that they acted on Hudson as stimulants. Sometimes, it is true, they proved irritants, but his anger was transient and ever of the mildest. If it was really necessary to contradict him I preferred doing it in talk, and our most prolonged discussions never ended in conflict. Although we always treated each other as if we were of the same age and standing, and true companionship is not possible on other lines, in later years when his heart trouble increased I never pushed argument in conversation or correspondence to its end. I gather, not without amusement, that some critics imagine me as not a little overawed by Hudson's personality. If some reason-

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able consideration for an ageing friend in fragile health betrays awe then I am ready to own that I showed it. But Hudson of all men would have resented most bitterly the lack of any sincerity in discussion. To show consideration openly would with him have been to defeat the very purpose of consideration.

The most celebrated letter writers are usually not those in whom we have the greatest faith. They had the reader in their minds and wrote with their eyes on posterity. Hudson's letters are at least utterly natural, for he loved writing them. He was a born correspondent. He begged for letters, for really long ones, and even commanded them, and vented his scorn on mere post cards though he himself wrote thousands of them. He wrote his books slowly and with infinite labour. During many of his later years he often set down no more than a hundred words or so in a day. But when he answered a letter his mind grew free and happy. He spoke rather than wrote. It will not be hard for those who knew him to catch at times the very tones of his voice.

I have therefore little to say of these letters except to repeat that he never wrote one with any notion of its being printed. There may be little harm in writing such for publication, but those who love realities can scarcely commend this branch of fiction. Few of us do not prefer Lamb's letters to those of Pope. It seems a pity to debauch the one branch of literature which should be, and often has been, totally without posturing. The modern anguish for originality tortures many: even a post card demands choice phrases and a chance letter is a chance of distinction from the herd. But Hudson had as little self-consciousness

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as may be looked for in humanity and preferred decent privacy to great possessions. His letters are sometimes carelessly expressed and were seldom corrected. He said just what came to him and hammered nothing thin. Though he liked originality he hated to see it hunted. His preference was for the simplest style. We are accustomed to say that French is the clearest language in Europe. This does but mean that French writers know their own tongue well and respect its qualities. They are better educated than the English. Their admiration of their own language gives the merest tiro something of the air of mastership. But there can be nothing clearer than the best English. It survives triumphantly the damage done it by Carlyle and by Meredith, who drew the worst qualities of his considered writing from the teutonized sage of Chelsea, and yet wrote letters in manly English. Walton's *Lives* will outlive what came in anguish from Cheyne Row and Swift will be read when most modern verbal gymnasts are dust. When style represents little more than a desire to be a writer of distinction, the man behind it may survive for a theatrical run as a phrase-monger. But phrases and paradoxes, contortions and obscurities are alien from the genius of English and Hudson felt this in his bones. All his writings are as clear as a mountain stream: his letters are as clear as his books.

Now since no man writes a book and says all he wishes to say, especially when he takes into sad account the acuteness or blindness of his critics, I may perhaps add a word to these comments. Some, who knew Hudson but slightly, however steeped they were in the well of his thought, seem to think that because I drew him primarily

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as a man I was oblivious of his merits as a writer and a thinker. A knowledge of Hudson's writings takes one far, but had they met him before he wrote or at least printed a word, when he was obscure and had no hope of fame or even of recognition, when indeed he was yet unconscious of his powers, when he struggled for the art of expression, they might in the course of years of happy and unhappy companionship have learnt just a little more of a not wholly inscrutable companion. Perhaps these letters, and others previously published, will prove to them that Hudson was not the less Hudson because he was at bottom very simply a man.

Some other reasons for depicting him as I did may emerge when this volume has been read by those desirous of understanding his whole nature. They may reflect that in dealing with those who were nearest to us and have now departed something has to be overcome. To speak of them at all is to break a very difficult silence, a silence which seems the more imperative the nearer we come to the deeper causes of our affection. I was therefore content to speak with all the detachment I could command, being well aware that without reticence and reserve what was written might lose far more than it gained. If there are any who lament that in his letters he should show his simple waywardness, his fantastic humour, his powers of bitter criticism, his love of gossip and the fireside chatter of a mere human being without sock or buskin or robes and a crown of olive, and prefer him as they have made him for themselves, I am a little grieved but leave them to a shrine which is most assuredly a cenotaph.

I have just now spoken of other letters. I mean those

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printed by my friend Mr. Edward Garnett, who, in his very beautiful introduction, objected to a passage in *W. H. Hudson: a Portrait*. In one of the conversations given there Hudson spoke, by some lapse of memory, of Mr. Garnett 'wanting' to be his literary executor. This Mr. Garnett denies and I accept his denial absolutely, though personally I do not quite understand why he should not have expressed such a wish. I myself asked to be given this labour in order to prevent the re-publication of much of his less worthy work. If I had known to what an extent search for things best forgotten was to go I should have urged my request as far as it might in decency be carried. The passion for the complete works of great writers is neither worthy nor wholesome, and too often it does but serve to nullify the very ends that any editor should seek. Who can thank those who dug up the epigrams which so degrade him who wrote *The Night Piece to Julia*? And if the author of *Tiger, tiger burning bright* came back to us what would he say to those who collected with disastrous care his random and foolish abuse of Rubens, Reynolds and lesser men? I saw Hudson burn a hundred things far better than many lately disinterred. His passion for destroying so many of his own letters was unfortunate but comprehensible. There are few of us who would not be the better contented if we were sure that some of our own were in ashes. But he carried destruction to the extreme and burnt thousands of them and much other matter that none might have grudged the printer. Apart from their value to those who love his work and the play of his mind even upon trifles, they had a financial value, a fact that he was far from ignoring in later life. It is,

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perhaps, even more remarkable, that he seems to have burnt the manuscript of almost every book he ever wrote. Probably these would be worth more than the whole sum he accumulated towards the end of his life. For instance, at what would the script of *Green Mansions* be valued now? So far as I am aware the only fragments remaining of any are some chapters of *Far Away and Long Ago*, *Dead Man's Plack*, and *A Shepherd's Life*, which he gave to Mrs. Rothenstein. Many times he pressed me into the work of destruction when he was making what he regarded as a final clearance. It was vain for me to urge that some of the script was valuable just because it was his. Tear it up! Into the fire with it! It is now a matter of wonder to me that I never made a struggle to get some of the big manuscripts from him. If I had had the least suspicion that he meant to destroy them all I should at least have tried to rescue my own favourites. Apart from their merit some of them were literary curiosities. The manuscript of *The Purple Land* was written on tiny notebook paper and stood when packed about two and a half feet in height. As soon as he got proofs of anything the original was always destroyed. But if a literary executor could not have saved more than has been saved he might at least have kept from publication things far more worthless than much that Hudson condemned to the flames.

Something perhaps remains to be said of the contents of these letters, especially as regards their scientific side. It is impossible to regard Hudson as a man of science. He was at once more and less. How far he was more will be determined easily by those who love his work. How far he was less is more difficult to put clearly. The science

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under which the work of a naturalist falls is obviously biology and Hudson was certainly no biologist. He had not even the more or less complete text-book knowledge of the student and it takes far more than that to be a leader in biology. For a text-book is but a body of teaching which professors and examiners more or less grudgingly, and often contemptuously, agree upon as a source from which students can without disaster draw answers to questions. It is a compromise between belated orthodoxy and advanced criticism. Hudson was never able to give himself to what he found mere drudgery. That he did find it such is strong evidence that he lacked the full scientific spirit, for those who have it know that sound work must be based on knowledge of what has already been achieved by others. Hudson felt the lack of this knowledge but rarely admitted as much. He often reasoned and invented hypotheses without being aware of what had been said by his predecessors. This is shown plainly in some of these letters and in his views of avian migration and even obscurer subjects, if indeed such exist. But he had a great grasp of facts and never pretended to be more than a field-naturalist.

And yet what do these lacunæ matter in his great web of patterned life and thought and philosophy which all can discover if they will but look for it? We might as well lament that he knew not a word of Greek or Latin and that his education was won in the universities of the pampa and the moors and woodlands of his adored England. Those who lament these gaps too much forget that the guide who sees afar some distant peak towards which the human caravan may move is greater than he who is but a

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guide for the day. Even if the finer spirit be wrong it is he who inspires hope and courage as the light dies and the night falls again in what seems a pathless wilderness. If Hudson failed to learn all he might have learned from science, those who do such work may learn from him that the dulled air of the closet and library needs at times renewal from the winds of heaven and that a star seen in a sudden cloud gap may sometimes give more light than any lamp in a laboratory.

It is, perhaps, desirable to say one thing more. In these letters Hudson often speaks favourably of my own work. I thought of suppressing everything of the kind, but on reflection I remembered his counter-balancing custom of seldom mentioning anything which he disliked or thought negligible. For him to select for written commendation some half-dozen or even a dozen books out of seventy, all of which were sent to him, shows a power of critical discrimination which some might have considered unduly severe. If it is added that in the end I often agreed with his eloquent silence, I hope not to be blamed for printing encouragement which was all the more to be valued because of its rarity.

I

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*March 14th, '97.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Pardon for not replying sooner to yours of a few days ago.

I'm sorry to hear you have not been so well lately.

Just now my mode of life is this: if when I get up (7 o'clock) it looks promising — the weather I mean — I go off for the day or a good portion of it, but when wet or gloomy I stay in, and do something till after dinner, then go out for a few hours.

So if you drop in here you must not be astonished if you do not find me. I never know when you are at your club. Last Sunday afternoon I spent with McCormick<sup>1</sup> and his wife, and he hoped (we all hoped) that you would 'happen in.' But you didn't 'happen.'

I like that sea fancy of his better than the elaborate allegory on which he has been so long engaged.

But I'm no critic and don't now care much about painted canvases.

I hope you are all well at 54.

With best regards,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> A. D. McCormick, R.I., whom I made acquainted with Hudson early in the 'nineties. He did some drawings for the earlier books and found Hudson curiously hard to satisfy. This was the more likely to happen because Hudson was never really capable of artistic judgments and often preferred a dry 'realistic' drawing of a bird to something more imaginative. The only exception to this that I can think of as regards illustrative work is his admiration for E. J. Detmold's bird pictures.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

April 28, 1897.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have just finished reading your book and have been deeply impressed by it. Not only the story, but the style, which is the style of *The Western Avernum* in many fine passages developed and most admirably fitted to the theme. Yet I daresay it is not a style that very many persons will like, and it is one which would certainly not fit any but a gloomy and tragical subject. Further, it is a style that lends itself to parody, and though it is easy to ridicule I am thinking of its effect on those who may have a natural dislike to it: for my own part I think it gives your book a character of its own and makes it, in fact, from any point, an original as well as a powerful one. That's my candid opinion. With a constitutional repugnance to whatever is morbid, and knowing beforehand what Quain's character would be like, I did not expect that the book would take hold of me so thoroughly. But of course you have altered it enormously: the gloom is not uniform: Mrs. Selby is a perfect character: and the end is a great relief. The best of it is that the interest grows steadily till the very end and that the finish is really more convincing than it would have been if the hero had killed himself. That scene in the church is magnificent.

I am glad to see you have some good reviews: and to-day I read a very favourable one in *London* — a journal I usually look at but never expect to see a novel reviewed in. I did not read the book sooner as I did not take it to Cookham

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Dean: but I took instead a lot of work which I am anxious to finish.

It was dreadful weather — wet and cold: but nightingales were singing and things looked pretty much the same down there. Mrs. Garrett is getting fat, and Mr. G. makes bricks and looks well and happy. Would I had been brought up to make bricks! I can't go away at present, I regret to say. Farewell, with kind regards to all,

W. H. HUDSON.

The reference is to *Maurice Quain*, 1897. In 1896 Hudson and I spent some days at Cookham Dean, a little village a short distance from Cookham, where there is a common. Hudson told me that a peculiarly fine sharp bird-note was that of the grasshopper warbler which he had never seen. We heard them often, but it was only after a long search that I found them in the middle of a thorny thicket. I well remember Hudson crawling into the bushes on his hands and knees. At this time he never used a field-glass, and in spite of my solicitations to try one it was only many years later that he succumbed and bought one. After this he was never without it. His early and rather obstinate view seemed to be that what you could not see with your eyes was not worth seeing. In the same way it took years to persuade him to ride a bicycle. 'I want to look at things, not to ride past them,' he said. The people with whom we lodged at Cookham Dean were the simple and kindly folk whom Hudson so much preferred to innkeepers. The brickmaker took me into the woods to the clay-pit where he worked and taught me how to make bricks, much to Hudson's delight, for though he was

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strangely lacking in every kind of manual dexterity he loved all the primitive arts and handicrafts.

### 3

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
October 22nd (1899)

DEAR ROBERTS,

I expected you on Wednesday. Thanks for the Rhodian book.<sup>1</sup> I have read it with great interest, and think that in the hero you have painted a much better picture than you did in *A Son of Empire*. The character of Rhodes, and the style, which is your own, are to me the chief merits. The story does not interest me much, perhaps because the other male actors in it are sketched too slightly — all except Romney and he has little to do except at the finish. Gertrude Langton I care nothing about; and considering the character and the bigness of the man Rhodes I should have preferred it if you had made this story (like your sailor yarns) a story with no woman in it. Or if a woman was indispensable to show that peculiar weakness in the hero's character, then I should have been satisfied with nothing but a glimpse of a vague evanescent petticoat. Perhaps the reason of this feeling of mine is that though women are very interesting to meet and to know they are not interesting (to me) in books. Men have many qualities to attract; women but one — charm, which is absolutely indispensable: and who has ever painted a woman with pen in which you recognize this elusive character? Not

<sup>1</sup> *The Colossus*, 1899.

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Meredith nor another. Again, when you recall the people you know intimately — the people you have never met and that never lived — how many women do you find among them? Precious few — they are nearly all men. Perhaps among them you will find a Thyrza, or a Rhoda Fleming, and you remember her and know her not because of her intrinsic qualities but rather because some adventitious circumstances, some chance tragic occurrence, or something in the surroundings, by chance stamped the fact of her existence on your mind.

So long,

W. H. HUDSON.

4

(1900)

DEAR ROBERTS,

I wired to you yesterday to meet me to-day, and as you didn't turn up either at Hanover Square or at your club I fear you may be seedy again.

I propose going over to look for you to-morrow, and, as I am anxious to get all my papers ready, all are now signed except the one for you. I shall, I think, be at 54 after 11 o'clock when I suppose you will be about; and if you are unable to go far there may be a Commissioner of Oaths close by; or I may be able to find one to take to you.

Well, I hope you are all right. If my plan doesn't suit you might be able to let me know — wire, I mean; but there won't be much time for that.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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This letter refers to the time when he became naturalized as an Englishman, just before he was given a Civil List Pension, the idea of which originated, I believe, with my friend Edward Clodd. The pension, of £150 a year, was given to Hudson in 1900. He resigned it later when his books began at last to afford him a decent living.

### 5

HAVANT (a beastly hole), HANTS,  
*April 15th, (1900).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got yours yesterday morning at Petersfield. I came with Mrs. H. on Wednesday last and we have been walking every day since in defiance of the furious cold winds. The curious thing is that we both had very bad colds when we left home and could hardly walk when we began our rambles, but day by day we have been getting better and are now pretty well. Between Petersfield and Harting we found a small pretty rustic village in a deep hollow among the downs where Gibbon was born and lived some years and did some of his work. The Gibbonian mansion is now a farm-house, great barns and other farm buildings round it, but it is a very fine place still. Yesterday we walked here, intending to go on to-day, but couldn't get away very well, so we intend leaving to-morrow, in spite of its being Bank Holiday, but do not know where we are going.

It is extremely sad about Percy Selous, and most extraordinary that any one keeping a pet venomous snake should

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get killed by it – by the prick of a very small thorn, so to speak: since those who keep such creatures know exactly what to do in case of accident. One cannot suppose that he did not instantly try every means to save himself. It was perhaps well for the Authors' Club that poor Dr. Mivart didn't die when feasted – perhaps at the time of delivering his speech: since if such a thing had happened there would (to good Catholic nostrils) have been a smell of sulphur about the premises of 3 Whitehall Court to linger many a day. One can but hope that his recent utterance and death and the disposal of the poor old man's corpse has given a little rough shaking to the faith of some of the English Vaughanites. Your *Plunderers* was excellent reading: I was quite ill when I read it – I was in bed, in fact, that day, and several times burst out into such a roar of laughter that Mrs. Hudson rushed into the room thinking I had got a fit. I shall send you back *Tang-weera* when I return: what a pity the author murders so many poor monkeys in cold blood and describes it as if he rather prided himself on such feats. In other respects the book is exceedingly good.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

Thanks for the offer of a loan – some day perhaps but no need just now.

Percy Selous, who was a cousin of Frederick Courtenay Selous and my brother-in-law; died in Michigan, just before the date of this letter, from the bite of a rattlesnake. He kept as pets and for observation many of these reptiles. He might have been saved but when on his way to a chemist

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turned back in order to make sure that he had fastened the cage properly.

Dr. Mivart, the naturalist and biologist, died on the very day he was to dine at the Authors' Club as a guest, 1st April, 1900.

The book Hudson refers to is *The Plunderers*, 1900.

### 6

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

April 29th, 1900.

DEAR ROBERTS,

If you are about again and it would be convenient for you to look in at the Library of the Zool. Soc. (3 Hanover Square) to-morrow at 3 o'clock, we could do the business then. There is a Commissioner of Oaths where Mr. Sclater and Mr. Waterhouse will have to go to put down their names: but I do not know where one can be found near your Club. However, if you know of one, and would prefer to have me go to you there I will gladly do so.

I was at the unveiling of Huxley's statue yesterday, and had a chair within three or four yards of the speakers. Sir Michael Foster is a capital speaker.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

This letter again refers to his naturalization papers, which were, I believe, completed the following day. Mr. P. L. Sclater, F.R.S., was the writer of the purely scientific part of the Argentine Ornithology. Sir Michael Foster,

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whom I knew well, will be remembered, even by those who take no interest in science, as the writer of a great text-book on Physiology, which was for long a standard work on that subject.

### 7

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

June 5th, 1900.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I found your postcard here on my return from the New Forest where I have been staying a few days. I also found the book *Nature in Downland*, and sent your copy to 54 Stokenchurch St.

Your home for tired authors would have little attraction for me. I hate all 'homes,' being rather of the Gipsy mind who loves the open heath better than the house.

I left my bicycle down in the Forest – it is rather too much to have to pay 3/- each way each time; and I am going down again in a very few days.

By the bye, when I am going a distance on the wheel I sometimes drop into the idea that I am on horseback, and only recover consciousness of the different sort of wild beast I am astride of when it begins to fly down a long slope. Are you ever troubled that way? Poor Miss Kingsley and poor Stephen Crane – both reported dead to-day! It is 10 o'clock now and guns are going off and the population of Westbourne Park is getting drunk all for joy that Pretoria has fallen. Well, I'm about tired of the

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war, and want to be back among the birds, beetles and snakes of the Forest.

Kind remembrances to Mrs. Roberts. I hope you are both well.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

This letter reminds me that when Hudson was once on an old knife-board 'bus in London he fell into deep contemplation and becoming subconsciously aware that the vehicle was going very slowly, he amazed himself and every one else by lifting up his umbrella and giving the 'bus a resounding blow with it. For the moment he believed he was on horseback.

8

FISHING COTTAGE, ITCHEN ABBAS, ALRESFORD, HANTS,  
*July 26 (1900).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for your tale of the Duchess which I shall be glad to read and laugh over once again. It was forwarded from St. Luke's Road to me here. We have been since Saturday in our cottage, and if you are settled somewhere within reasonable distance I hope you will pay us a visit. We are quite alone, our own servants, etc., and when we go lock up the cottage and leave it to the wild creatures. The little old village of Itchen Abbas is near, tho' out of sight, but next to nothing is to be had in the one small general shop: so we have to go to Winchester or to Alresford, 4 and 3 miles respectively. Sir Edward wrote to me

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from London yesterday, he was just going north, and his wife is at their place in Northumberland. From Saturday until last evening we saw no paper, and heard no news, but things have not progressed much, we see. Even here in the cool of the big lime trees I sit under most of the day it is hot — what must it be in loathsome London!

Let me know where you are.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

This fishing cottage was, I believe, lent to Hudson and his wife by Lord Grey of Fallodon, then Sir Edward Grey, whose appreciation of him can be found in *Dead Men's Plack*, as printed in Dent's complete edition of Hudson's books. It would be possible to say much of Hudson's regard for Lord Grey, and all connected with him, since he was one of the first to recognize the surpassing quality of the work done when he was little known.

9

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

November 4th, 1900.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Many thanks for the copy of *Lord Linlithgow*. It has, like *The Colossus*, tremendous go and carries one on like a torrent, and I suppose most readers will be satisfied with the ending. My interest culminates with the scene at the club which is about as effective a scene as you have

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ever written. Pole being the only character I thoroughly realize and feel a strong sympathy with I am pleased when he lets himself go and smashes the hero physically as well as morally. After that I don't care what becomes of Harford, and if I had written the book should have let him go to the devil.

What a pity the book didn't come out a month or two before the General Election! It might have made a row then, but 'Lord Linlithgow's' disappointing demeanour seems to take the whole story, including the letters, out of the realm of fact, and make it a mere story and nothing more. I hope it is still going though. I see no notices of it and fancy it is a book the critics, or Editors rather, would be a little shy of.

I am not too well, and sick at having to stay this dull grey weather in town.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

That new boy's paper is no good, I fancy — it looks paltry and the Editor never answered my letter.

*Lord Linlithgow, 1900*, a book of a political character dealing with the Liberal Imperialists of this date and the dealings of some of the official Liberal Party with Rhodes, who subsidized them on the understanding that Irish members should be retained at Westminster if any Home Rule Bill were passed, and with the way in which this agreement was treated. The letters in the book were paraphrases of the original letters which passed through my hands.

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10

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*Xmas Day, 1900.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for your letter: I envy you at having escaped from this unlovely place for these unlovely festivities.

I don't know how it is with you with regard to Xmas greetings — cards and all that — but in spite of all I have done to break free of these most irksome conventions I still find myself cursed with them. For years past I have made it a point to inform every person I knew that I do not send cards and have even broken off acquaintance with a good number of good people just to give myself more liberty. And yet here I am, with a shower of these undesired tokens falling upon me at every post. And having no tokens to send in return I must at least write, and for days past I have been occupied with useless letters about nothing, and wishing the people I write to were all at the devil. I don't mean you — you have sent me no card, thank God, or whoever it is that presides over this department.

I have a good many things out — articles, a book or two, etc. — but with the exception of some very small things the stuff does not go, and so I must wait and wait before the blessed time comes when I too can shake off the mud of the metropolis and go away towards and past Hindhead and see and breathe again.

With kind regards to Mrs. Roberts,  
Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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Shall look in at the Club one day after your return.  
Have you got my room at the Royal Huts<sup>1</sup>? Churt is a  
sweet village — Thursley too.

### II

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*April 21st, 1901.*

MY DEAR M.

Thanks for your note. I am glad you are getting such splendid weather, and almost wish our rambles had been deferred a fortnight. But what is, is, and things happen just as they like and there's an end on't. Yesterday I had a day in Richmond Park and saw the Gt. crested grebes just arrived for the summer at the Pin Ponds. Also the herons breeding in Sidmouth Wood. If only to-morrow will be as fine! I am going for the day to Woburn Abbey, the Duchess of Bedford having invited me to go and see the beasts there. She thinks they will interest me — does any woman or man know what does or would interest me, I wonder? I have just lent your *Fugitives*<sup>2</sup> to Mrs. Hubbard who is a great admirer of your books. That was a good paper of yours in yesterday's *Literature*. It is written out of a full mind and is all the more effective because of the quiet restrained style and the light way in which you smilingly touch upon the blunders of the realist and scientific fictionists who have not absorbed their know-

<sup>1</sup> Inn at Hindhead.

<sup>2</sup> Taken by *Assault*, 1901, also printed in U.S.A. as *The Fugitives*.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

ledge. By the by you go wrong in *The Fugitives* tho' you don't say much about the feathered denizens of the grove. Gwen or some one hears a blackbird whistle one frosty day in winter. She must have heard a thrush: the blackbird never indulges in a song or whistle in winter, though he chuckles often enough when disturbed.

Where is Cowley — or is it a mere imaginary place? In half an hour the train got to Bletchley Station where Jim Carruthers<sup>1</sup> turned up, and carried off his jelly-fish of a woman. I get out to-morrow at Bletchley Station for Woburn Abbey, so I suppose Cowley is on the Euston line further away.

Hope to see you when you get back, and hope your fine weather will last.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

12

SILCHESTER,

December 19th, 1901.

DEAR M. R.

I trust it will not wound you in your tenderest part if I say that I don't feel a penny the worse for all your mockery of the flower theory: but I am feeling a little bit anxious about you. If your letter is not intended to be merely 'funny' and nothing more, then I fear you must be getting a little weak in your intellectuals. You say —

<sup>1</sup> A character in the book mentioned above.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

'One might just as truly (or falsely) say that human eyes were beautiful because they are like flowers. And that, I think, is nearer the truth after all.'

Do you indeed! Well, put it in this way - Human beings have for about half a million years or thereabouts, been worshipping the curved line (of course I mean (or you mean rather) as a thing beautiful per se) in babes, eggs, fruit, snail-shells, etc., and having at last had their attention drawn to the fact that these same curves are to be seen in the female members of their own species, they make the discovery that women are beautiful in form! That's putting the cart before the horse with a vengeance - ain't it!

Again you say - 'Are you prepared to go the whole length and say that the blue sky is beautiful because some pretty women have blue eyes? That is quite as logical.' Can your poor mind not see that the size and form of the blue flower, as well as its iris-like blueness, are elements in the feeling that results? The blueness of the sky has other associations, the beauty we see in it a quite different origin. It is to begin with the pleasurable feelings arising from fine weather and all which that means, and has meant to the race. It is not in any case mere overflow of the sexual feelings, and the *expression* is not the same. But I am not going into the whole subject as I find that there would be so much to explain. The most laughable thing in your letter is that after ridiculing my 'pretty little theory' you give yourself away by the remark that our feeling for flowers is partly physiological and part association, and that we feel most for red flowers because they are more like us in warmth, etc.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

You are in fact just like a pig who in trying to swim a river cuts his own throat.

Yours — compassionately,

W. H. HUDSON.

In later years Hudson, in spite of his humorous attack and mis-reading of what I meant, came round very closely to the view that the blueness of the sky and all its associations had much to do with our feelings for blue flowers. In his working copy of *Birds and Man*, left to me with others by his will, there is a written unpublished note which is of interest.

*'Charm of Flowers.* I am now inclined to think that the expression in blue flowers is in part due to association with the blue sky and that in a cloudy climate like ours this may, indeed, be a large element in the feeling. Blueness itself — that is, a very pure blue — suggests the sky colour in fine weather. Gissing (A.) sends me the following passage *apropos* of this subject from Sir John Ferne on azure in blazonry: "Which blew colour representeth the Aire amongst the elements, that of all the rest is the greatest favourer of life, as the only nurse and maintainer of . . . spirits in any living creature. The cullur blew is conversely taken for the clear sky which appeareth so often as the tempests be overblowne and notes prosperous successe and good fortune to the wearer in all his affayres."'

I may note that this copy of *Birds and Man*, normally containing no illustrations, was extra-illustrated with many photographs of Wells in Somerset, which place he greatly loved, and with a picture of some geese. It also contains a

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

further note on names of flowers and a long bitter note in pencil on the hated bird collector.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*December 27th, 1901.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I found your letter on my return here yesterday, and after the Xmas orgie it was neither stimulating nor refreshing; but I have had a day's cycling since and can now sit down and reply to you good-humouredly in spite of your exasperating tone of superiority.

It amuses me when you say 'bless my heart' and pity my poor little simple philosophy, and tell me what a big big thing the origin of beauty is, and that it is not to be explained in a chapter on flowers. But with all your mocking you must know that it is not a piece of reasoning: on the contrary it strikes me that you are merely splashing about on the chance of something coming to you in that way. It is all a sad jumble with dusky Hawaiians, and balls and ellipses and the love of symmetry — nations that do not kiss, and the illusion that women are beautiful and Schopenhauer, whose distorted ideas are no longer regarded. When you say that the blue sky, blue mists, etc., are suggested to your mind by the blue flower, you say nothing against what I have advanced about the charm of flowers: you have merely discovered in yourself (and to me it is an interesting fact) a new and additional cause of expression (for you) in the blue flower. But about *expres-*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

sion: you ask if I am not a victim to the word, and take it to mean the *total result the flower or object has on the mind*. You are wrong: that is *not* the sense in which the word is used by writers on the sense of beauty. The expression is the result of association — the feeling with which the consciousness has become suffused in connection with the object, or scene, or sound. Hence the object which affects us pleasurable is a union of two things and of two values — its original quality which all men recognize and admire, and the quality of expression which it receives from memory and imagination. This may be a cumbersome definition, but unfortunately my books are in the British Museum and I can only put a very long matter in a few words as best I can. If men of a black or black-eyed race find a blue flower beautiful it is because of its original beautiful quality, its bright and pure colour. If, in addition, it has *expression* for them — in other words if it affects them emotionally on account of its associations, those associations will not of course be with beautiful human eyes, but with other agreeable things and experiences — the blue sky if you like, and blue lakes in a thirsty land, and blue smoke rising from the peaceful village. The blue flower will have an expression but not the same as for people of blue-eyed races. Perhaps I ought to go back to my definition and explain that the expression does not imply that images are suggested or called up — I mean the images of associated objects: on the contrary in a vast majority of cases there are no images, but only the pleasing sensations originally received from the associated objects which have been incorporated in the expressive object and which make the expression. This may not seem very clear but

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

you may be able to puzzle it out. I can't notice everything in your varied document, but there are one or two things I must notice. Why should you say that 'the reason for the beauty of colour is a little deeper than you seem to imagine,' when I treat only of expression and have never in my life said a word on the cause of beauty in colour! For that, I imagine, one would have to go further back than the savage or even the man-ape. When I say that I see a woman in every beautiful flower and am swamped by the sexual idea, you do not quite know what you say. Some modern thinkers seem to believe that all beauty in whatever it appears is but an overflow of the sexual idea, but that is not my belief, although I do think that it is a very good provisional working theory.

And now – etc., etc. – By the bye, so far the 'indolent reviewers' who have noticed my book<sup>1</sup> have carefully avoided the flower subject – just what I expected!

With best wishes for 1902 to all at No. 13.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*July 21st, 1902.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I shall not see you soon as I must go down to Winchester on Wednesday and my day to-morrow will be full. I have been down in Kent visiting Garnett – I couldn't

<sup>1</sup>*Birds and Man.* Chap. VII. A secret of the charm of flowers.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

do less than pay him a visit after his laudation of *The Purple Land* in the *Academy*. Thus it comes about that I have only now read *Immortal Youth*. My first feeling was that you, capable of fresh themes, should have chosen this old one for a start of the enthusiastic young aspirant coming up to London with his bundle of manuscripts to win fame and fortune: also because having once told the story which appeared in *In Low Relief* from the inside you had now come to it in another form and told it over from the outside — so to speak. But of course with a difference, since the St. Teresa comes to us here in the guise of a feline cat of double distilled cattish felinity. But the book grows in power and interest as one progresses and I am inclined to think it the best of all your novels. Grace and Cynthia are especially good, the males are not so good. But to my mind the best of the book is all that is not the story and to those who go to a novel *for* a novel, a pure story, will seem but a burden — the vast knowledge and vigorous thought displayed on every page. I cannot but regret that all, or most, of that is wasted where you put it, and where indeed it is not wanted. Your characters (to me) are men-like little pegs on which you hang before us man, the social animal. And why, I would respectfully ask, should that bloated dropsical monster, Benjamin Kidd, have this vast field all to himself?

Shall hoarse Fitzgerald bawl . . .  
And I not sing?

is what you ought to say.

Garnett told me that Stephen Gwynn said to him in conversation the other day that he, Gwynn, looked on

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Morley Roberts as one of our very best writers of short stories. So do I, and the reason is, I fancy, that in a short story you have no space to dilate on man the social species and his place or destiny. In a long work you let yourself go on that subject and the result is (for me) that the fabric is so bejewelled with compressed and well-expressed original thought that the fabric itself, the story, seems of little importance. Thus it comes about that I blame when I praise and praise when I blame. And so good-night and good luck.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

15

SELBORNE, ALTON, HANTS,  
*October 13th (1902).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

There's no decent place to stay at in this poor village at present so can't ask you to join us here, altho' I should have liked to as I wanted you to see Gilbert White's old and famous place. At the Inn there was no room, and only one cottage to stay at, and on coming to it we found the one small sitting room had already been given to some one else who was staying here. Fortunately it turned out to be a fellow I know, the author of a Bibliography of Gilbert White, and he at once invited us to share the poor little room with him. Then two others came — one I knew — and they too shared it with us. They've gone now and we can move a bit and sit down and write a letter. But

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

the whole place — rooms, attendance, and all — is of the poorest description. We shall perhaps go elsewhere one day this week and find some more comfortable lodging in some other village near. Bowdler Sharpe of the British Museum is also here, so that I see Londoners enough: and I know most of the natives too. I've written to Duckworth to send you one of my copies of Garnett's little book, and hope you will get it in a day or two. The weather is not good enough to get about but we are getting rid of our colds and coughs in spite of drawbacks. I wonder how you are — you might drop me a line and let me know.

Mrs. Hudson joins in kind regards,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*December 12th (1902).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your card a day or two ago and thought to see you to-day, but can't manage it as going out of a morning upsets my day, and I fear you will be out in the afternoon too. I'm glad you are all right and sorry Mrs. Roberts is not so well. I get on slowly with my work — so much so that some books sent to me to review I've returned. I fancy London is poisonous and poisons a man most when he has been out of it for some time, breathing air not laden with carbonic acid gas, and eating food not kept from decaying by means of formalin, boracic acid and

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

salicylates. I'm going on the total abstinence system now too. In the country I felt quite well, and in the wet weather in late November quite enjoyed going for long walks and getting thoroughly wet. At Lymington I made the acquaintance of the Patmores, the widow and the daughter Bertha, who is an artist. I didn't come up till the first week in December but suppose I must sit still now until my work's done.

I wish you could tell me of a good black-and-white landscape man who could do me a drawing *from a photograph*. I'm getting some illustrations but they are mostly animals. Don't forget to let me know of anyone you may know. I may be able to drop in and see you one day during the week at the club — perhaps Tuesday. I've got your book,<sup>1</sup> *The Way*, etc. Many thanks. With good wishes for the season to all.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

1903.

Thanks for letter and book received two or three days ago. I've been intending to see you every day but haven't had time: there have been journeys up and down to Kingston owing to serious illness there, and other things to do; but perhaps I shall be able to get round to your club on Tuesday next. I'm just reading the book<sup>2</sup> and won't say

<sup>1</sup>*The Way of a Man*, 1902.

<sup>2</sup>*Rachel Marr*, 1903.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

anything about it yet — one mustn't judge till one has seen the whole thing and half a thousand pages can't be read at a sitting; nor at several unless one possesses or wishes to practise the divine art of skipping. I've read as far as a funny printer's error which you will perhaps not mind correcting, if you should have another edition: — p. 192, second line.

Mrs. Hudson is further on than that, only she had to go yesterday morning to Kingston and hasn't returned yet so I have it now.

I'm very behindhand with work of my own: requests for articles I've had in plenty and have done next to nothing: but am now hoping to get a few written for *The Speaker*. Little things of my own about wild nature. The wetness of this weather has made me content in a miserably discontented way to remain in town when I ought to be elsewhere to do a little gleaning in the poor fields before winter comes to plough it all in — the few scattered ears and the flowers of the aftermath.

I hope you are all well at 13.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
1903.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I finished *Rachel* last night and yesterday was too ill with a touch of congestion on the liver to write. I wish

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

I could have read it straight through as I would then perhaps have got a better idea of the book: but I had to do it bit by bit with things to do and think about in the intervals. In a novel it doesn't matter how or where one reads, but this is not a novel as I understand the word – not a picture of this complex and vari-coloured life we see about us. You have tried the picture in former works but as a rule some over-mastering passion in one of your characters comes into the rest and is like a splash of scarlet on your canvas. Here you have got a subject, one and complete, exactly fitted to your genius and temperament – men and women of the old simple kind moved by tremendous passions acting out their life's tragedy in the right surroundings. The scene might have been anywhere in the world outside of civilization – in the Shetlands, or Connemara, or the mountains of Macedonia, or (2 or 3000 years ago) in Rome or Greece or Carthage. Such people have always existed and will exist perhaps till the leaven of civilization has leavened the whole lump. It is a tragedy like *Remorse*, or Shelley's *Cenci* or *The Mourning Bride*; or perhaps more like a Greek tragedy, and your people who love and hate so heroically remind me of Cleon and Antigone, Orestes, Electra, Clytemnestra and the others who live and die for ever in Sophocles. Only your chorus is not like the Greek with its shivering O me, Alas! I begin to perceive that something important with blood in it is about to happen: its sad helpless running commentary on life and the implacable Fates and unpitying gods who regard men as we do insects. Your chorus is a very robust modern, who has all knowledge and knows how to apply it to the matter in hand. And with it the poetic

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

spirit so that his comments come out like a lofty shout. It all sings itself to me in that prose of yours and the effect is like an opera of Wagner. I daresay that this which I like best the majority of your readers will care least for. The novel-reader is as impatient for the story as a little child, or as if he did not know life and is filled with wonder when he is told of it. I should like to hear your critics on this point. But say what they will *Rachel Marr* is a great book. The only criticism I can make after perusal is that I wish the end did not come quite so brutally when Rachel takes up the crucifix. One knows that an end of that kind is coming, but it would have been better, it strikes me, if you had not said it that way, but in a quieter way: that, for instance, when the dawn came it did not separate them, or that they slept peacefully side by side after all their sorrows — I congratulate you.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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STOUR PROVOST, GILLINGHAM, DORSET,

July 18th, 1903.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm here in Hartley's village for a short stay, and have a bedroom in a cottage close to 'The Cottage' where he lives. He is rather seedy just now and doing nothing for a day or two, but on Monday he goes to Montacute, near Yeovil, where he is doing a picture. They have a pretty cottage in beautiful surroundings, and if I could have found a place I should have wired to you a day ago

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

to ask you to come for the week-end. As it is I leave on Monday, and shall cycle to Sherborne, only 12 miles distant and spend a night there, then go on Tuesday to Cerne Abbas, and Melcombe Kingham to spend a day with Bosworth Smith, and on Wednesday I shall most probably go on to Dorchester. You might run down and join me there for a few days and we could visit Hardy together. By the bye, Tess of the D'Urbervilles' village is only 2 miles from here — Marnhull, 'tis named — but I haven't been there yet as it has been raining most of the day. Yesterday I was at Mere, and the day before at Shaftesbury. You might let me hear from you on Wednesday next at Post Office Dorchester. After going there I don't know where I shall be — it may be here in London. I hope you are well: I suppose the book won't come out till the autumn season.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

Pardon paper — 'tis all I have!

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HARROGATE,

*Tuesday morning (1903).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have not been at all well since I saw you — in fact I was getting weaker every day and suffering considerably from pains in my stomach: then Tom Robinson told me to come here and try the waters. My idea is to go into apartments for a week or so to see how I get on,

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

and I'm looking round and staying temporarily at Roker's Hotel, not far from the station. It is a commercial hotel and I am half inclined to stay a week in it as the people are very obliging and there's a nice quiet room to sit and smoke in. I suppose that four hours' shaking in the train from King's Cross did my system some good, as I had some refreshing sleep last night — the first time in the last two or three weeks.

As to literary work I can't touch it at present and can't think of anything to come. What revolts me is the thought that when I had not a penny and almost went down on my knees to Editors, publishers and literary agents I couldn't even get a civil word, and of ten — or perhaps twenty — MSS. sent nine (or nineteen) would be sent back. And now that I don't want the beastly money and care nothing for fame and am sick and tired of the whole thing they actually come to beg a book or article from me. I have had requests for a book from four publishers during the last few weeks and have not even replied to the letters sent me, and do not suppose I ever shall. But perhaps there is some miraculous quality in these waters, and later, when I get away from this dreary country and back to the south or west Nature's ministrations may bring me back the desire for production. *The Purple Land*<sup>1</sup> is the only book of mine I see before me at present. I hope you are keeping well and fit. If I can get rid of this catarrh in a week or so I go straight back to take Mrs. Hudson to some place on the coast. Kindest regards to yours.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *The Purple Land* was re-published in 1904.

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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19 BIRKENHEAD AVENUE, KINGSTON-ON-THAMES,  
*May 5th, 1904.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Many thanks for the book<sup>1</sup> – I didn't know you had one coming out just now, and presume it does not contain the tales you have been writing lately.

I've only had time to read one of the shortest stories yet – 'The Smile of La Gioconda,' which is very good indeed. It served the fellow right – he deserved no better destiny. I wonder if he went to the Divorce Court about it? Laying aside the man's art, or devotion to art, there is in defective men – men physically unattractive to women – an intensified and exaggerated sense of proprietorship in a beautiful woman. If some miserable misshapen creature who is able by his wealth to buy a beautiful woman gives her his name and puts her at the head of his table, he loves to bring in all the finest specimens of male humanity he can to admire her and gloat in secret over their discomfiture – to prove to them that he is as good or better than they. It gets the better of their jealousy and carries them too far in many cases, unless the woman is naturally cold and calculating. The wealthy humpback should always buy an American beauty, since in the ladies of that land the sexual interest, some say, is dying out. Well, I don't know.

Good-bye, hope to see you soon.

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *Bianca's Caprice*, 1904.

# MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

DEAR ROBERTS,

June 24th (1904).

I'm back here again, but have only been back two DAYS, and hope to see you very soon. I was left with a dog — a fox-terrier of the female sort on my hands. Its poor mistress not long before her death thought it would have to be poisoned as its temper was so bad towards everyone except herself. But I've broken it into a good little thing and as we can't keep her I'm taking her this morning to Silchester to get her a home in a cottage down there. These poor little parasitic semi-humans sadden one: but 'the call of the wild' is never really dead in the dog of this breed, as it is with pugs and other degenerate varieties, and I'm going to put it where there is a common and unlimited furze and the fascinating smell of rabbits hanging about and perhaps it will forget us and be happy.

Best regards to all: — I shall be back on Monday.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

I reviewed *A Naturalist in the Guianas*,<sup>1</sup> in last Saturday's *S.R.*

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

Tuesday evening, 1905.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your postcard yesterday and hope you'll soon be

<sup>1</sup> By Eugene André, 1904.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

all right again. Here I am still in London: that is I'm here now and find it difficult to get away for any length of time. I was away at Easter for 9 or 10 days and had cold cloudy weather in Wiltshire where I went. Still I was able to keep myself pretty warm by cycling a good deal, spending 8 or 9 hours out every day. I was on that little river called the Nadder — one of the five rivers which unite at Salisbury in the Avon. I visited 17 villages and stayed at Tisbury most of the time. When I left there I dragged my bicycle up onto the crest of the Down — 775 feet — and cycled along the crest 10 miles on the way to Salisbury. There is an ancient road along the crest but little used now and mostly overgrown with grass. Perhaps I shall be able to get away after next week. I envy you being kept awake by nightingales! I haven't heard one yet. Thanks for *Captain Balaam*: I had not read all the stories in it and enjoyed it very much. I should much like to see Tappington Grange but that pleasure must be put off for some months, as if and when I go out of town now it must be to Wilts. I saw McCormick on Sunday: he is going to do some illustrations for a little thing of mine<sup>1</sup> — a child story — for Duckworth. I wish you luck with the new book in prospect.

With kind remembrances to all,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *A Little Boy Lost*, 1905.

MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

June 23rd, 1905.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Have got your p.c. just on my return from a fortnight on Salisbury Plain and thereabouts. I'm not very well and hope to get away again soon: one thing that brought me back was to see the MS. and illustrations for my child's book<sup>1</sup> safe in the publisher's hands but McCormick hasn't nearly finished the drawings yet. There will be 25 or 30.

There is no prospect of a country book at present. I have had to be too much in town (where I can't do it) to get on at all; and I have been doing reviews, articles, etc., instead.

I don't know if you saw Mrs. Hubbard's death — there was a long obituary in *The Times* — it was a great relief to me as she was a great friend and helped me with my work. She was a very remarkable woman: it is wonderful to think that a big circle of friends and all of her own family, from the old men — some over 80, her brothers — down to her grandchildren and nephews, some at and some out of the University, all regarded her as guide, philosopher and friend.

I hope you and Mrs. Roberts will have a good time at the Lakes, and that you will come back strong and sound again. What a lot of talk there is about *The Dark Lantern!* It has been pretty well abused and I know Miss Robins published it with fear and trembling. On Tuesday I'm

<sup>1</sup> *A Little Boy Lost*, 1905.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

lunching with Lady Grey, and shall hear from her what Miss R. thinks of her reviewers. They are bosom friends. Emily joins in kindest regards to your wife.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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BATH,

*July 27th, (1905).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am here to-day and gone to-morrow. I must go to Wells while in this region, so shall make my visit fit in with the Sabbath for the sake of the Sunday service in that loveliest cathedral in the country. I have to look up people I know and used to know at Wells which will take me about three days and then I go to Bristol for a day: then here again to wallow a day or two more, like Bladud's swine in the divine water, and then I return to town on Saturday, to-morrow, week. I forgot to mention several things when I saw you: one that I had two days' important labours to perform at the Sessions House, Clerkenwell, on a Grand Jury. I could have got off, but didn't try simply because it was an interesting task, altho' the experience would have been of more service to you than it can be to me. We examined 79 cases and returned true bills in all but one, and that was thrown out because I insisted on it, and then all out of our 19 followed me. Another thing I forgot to say: when at Brighton the other day I ran over to Shoreham and found that Mrs. Wood had sold her shop and gone to Winchester. I have had no time to read your

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

new book as I couldn't bring it this trip — Mrs. Hudson was just reading it. But I got *The Grand Magazine* and enjoyed your sea story. People are so debauched with abundance of illustrations in their monthlies I fear the *Grand* will not succeed though it goes on a good idea. It is at all events distinctly unlike every other periodical we have. A short time ago a remarkably good original monthly magazine (*Helios*) sprang up in Spain and I enjoyed it immensely for a year or so; now alas! they send me *La Lectura*, successor to *Helios*, and a poor sort of *Review of Reviews*. *Helios* was too good to live! It is very cold here — ice 2 or 3 inches thick in the fountains — but very bright. And Bath is a nice town every way.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

September 18th, 1905.

Thanks for p.c. I came back from Bath not feeling any better, but think I'm improving a bit now. *Lady Pen*<sup>1</sup> was highly amusing and it struck me as almost more suitable for a play than a book, so hope it will be dramatized soon. If you are up on Tuesday can't you come to the Bird Meeting at 3 at West. Pal. Hotel where I shall be?

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *Lady Penelope*, 1905.

# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

November 20th, 1905.

MY DEAR OLD BOY,

Of course I ought to have written sooner – but there it is, ‘folks don’t do as they oughter’ as the poet says. When you sent the book I was down ill (in bed in fact) with a bad cold. Mrs. Hudson was ill too, and we had nigh three weeks of it and are only just getting better. I was just preparing to get away to the country when I took ill – thinking of Cornwall, and now I’m able to travel I shall perhaps set out on Wednesday morning, and stay one night in Exeter and then go on. My mind was divided between Fowey on one side and Bude on the other, but now I’m inclined to go right on to St. Ives. Hartley and his wife are there and like it very much. I have no wish to ‘abuse your book,’<sup>1</sup> though it is no great book after *Rachel Marr*. It is the subject I don’t like and oddly enough it is the same subject that Percy White had – his *Patient Man* which I have not read yet and simply *can’t* read. Somehow the social idlers are a people I loathe. I don’t care how bad a man is and what crimes he commits, how many wives he has, even if he ‘sets fire to the world,’ as the gaucho says, so long as he is a man and is doing something in the world – showing in his life work, even if it be destructive, that he is a man. The Idlers are to me simply vile. These being my sentiments I was rather disgusted with myself for reading your book straight through with very great interest. Mrs. Hudson read it in the same

<sup>1</sup> *The Idlers*, 1905.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

way and we were grateful for the amusement it gave us when ill and shut up. Still I'm glad your next book will be out of the pestilent atmosphere of London and its smart Society. Since getting up I've paid a long-wished visit to Blunt, who is in London for the winter, ill, and condemned to three months on his back. The man has a fiery soul, and when excited in talking of certain things his eyes look those of a man who is rushing sword in hand on his enemies.

Our best regards to yours,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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12 THE TERRACE, ST. IVES, CORNWALL,

*November 29th (1905).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I left home on Wednesday and am glad I came to St. Ives as it is a singularly interesting place. Perhaps you know it tho' I never heard you say so. The fishing town, all huddled in a very small space, might be a mediæval town so ancient and queer does it all look. The men too are most interesting, most pious too, so that if the Sabbath-breaking East Anglians ever come here to catch fish there will be broken heads and nets destroyed over the business. There is quite a colony of artists here — 40 at least, but no one would venture to go a sketching on Sunday. Some time ago a young Japanese artist came here and not knowing the custom set up his easel down by the

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

sea on Sunday morning. He quickly brought a shower of stones on himself and canvas and had to leave the place at once. I found Hartley and his wife in their apartments, each with a studio down in the old part where the sea washes the walls under their windows. They wanted to take me to the artist club last evening, as they all meet on Saturday nights, but I kept away. I think one can get too much of artists. Too much picture talk. Poor old Hartley is an exception and is as usual the best fellow in the world. He sends his love. We were talking about *Rachel Marr* and they both admire it as much as I do. We wondered if you got your scenery at Mevagissey. I may touch that spot by and by, when I leave this place and go over to Newlyn and along that side to Falmouth. But I shall stay here a week or two and try to do some work. I am just doing an article<sup>1</sup> for *The Speaker* on John Burrough's new book *Ways of Nature*, in which he goes for the new school of nature workers — Thompson-Seton and Co. I wish you would write me here and tell me just how you are. Your postcard the other day said nothing about that and I want to know whether or not you are getting better and how you were before that operation. It has rained most of the time since I came here and the wind blows furiously, but it is exceedingly mild.

With best regard to Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Selous,  
Yours ever,  
W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> 'Truth, Plain and Coloured,' *Speaker*, 1905. The article also dealt with *Red Fox*, by G. C. D. Roberts.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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12 THE TERRACE, ST. IVES, CORNWALL,  
*December 12th, 1905.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I haven't much to say and only write to let you know I'm still sticking on here. Of course I want to see the South side very much, but there is so much to interest one here, and the climate is so sweet and soft after London that I'm tempted to stay on from day to day. I must do some work wherever I may be, and having got my rooms in a good place, overlooking the little harbour, with its good fishing boats and cloud of gulls I'm in no hurry to be off.

I see Hartley every day at his studio where he is getting on well with a big landscape, but Brangwyn I haven't seen yet. I went to meet him yesterday at H.'s studio where we were to have tea but got there too late — they had had the tea and turned out before I arrived. All this painting seems a great waste of time. I shall try to do some sketches of this part of the country. The people are very interesting, especially away from the coast — the villagers and farmers. I like them very much. *The Spectator* people want me to write for the paper, but haven't made up my mind. Poor Cornish has been down some months with a bad ailment from which he may never recover, and they want some one to take his place. I believe Ch. L. Groves is editing it now, or doing most of it. *The Spectator* and *Speaker* both gave my child's book<sup>1</sup> good reviews on Saturday last. I'm afraid Hartley is very far from strong:

<sup>1</sup> *A Little Boy Lost*, 1905.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

I went for a walk on Sunday with him but he was soon knocked up: he looks dreadfully pale and pulled down. I'm here till Friday for certain, and may stay a week longer. To-morrow I'm going to Penzance and Marazion for the day.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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12 THE TERRACE, ST. IVES, CORNWALL,  
*Sunday, December, 1905.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

It would be very jolly to see you down here: my intention is to stay on to next Friday and then over Newlyn way; but if I heard you were coming I should stay longer. There's a crowd of artists here, but I don't see them as I've declined to go to the club they have, with the Hartleys. I suppose I know some of them as East is among the crowd and I know him: and Brangwyn comes tomorrow too. Groves (Charles L.) has been trying to get me to contribute to *The Spectator* as Cornish can do no more. He is down with haemorrhage of the lungs and will perhaps not recover. I don't suppose I ever shall, as *The Speaker* wants all I can write and *The Saturday Review* asks me too for articles. Someone writes me to say that Harmsworth has now got *The World* and adds 'Will he buy everything?' I was out along the coast for a walk with Hartley this morning, but he is not up to long walks and is rather lame still. The weather is almost summer-like, and for the last two days it has been splendid

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

sunshine and not too much wind. It's a long distance to come, but if it does you good it is worth it. My nerves, digestion, lungs and all the rest seem to be improving a good deal. On Sunday I was out 8 hours, most of the time walking, and slept like a top after it.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

February 28th, 1906.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Why send me a picture p.c.? seeing I love them about as much as a Xmas card or a Valentine? Perhaps the great advantage is that there's no space to write anything on this sort of card. I wonder why you went to St. Jean for (*sic*) when it must be a rather sad place for its associations. But perhaps Madame Gissing is there. I hope so and that you will have some time with her. Have you seen *The Gentleman's Magazine* article about G. G.? I suppose it is by Bullen but there's not much in it. You know Harmsworth bought *The Gentleman* and put Bullen in charge of it. Thomas Seccombe is helping to edit it, and he wrote asking me to contribute. It does not look a very promising magazine. I'm up for a few days from Cornwall, as I intend to keep there now for a month or two longer. There's so much material to be got there for my kind of article, and I've arranged to give *The Speaker* six — if I don't want to give more. Two have appeared and the third will follow in about a fortnight. I've got an article

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

on Lady Grey as a nature-lover to appear in the next *Speaker* — Saturday. Sir E. G. and his sister, Mrs. Graves, have read what I have written and approve of it: I should have been afraid to say anything about her in print without their knowledge and consent. She was a glorious woman and it was horrible that she should have been crushed out of existence in that way. I look forward to your Brit. Col. novel<sup>1</sup> and am glad it is to be a serious work. *The Blue Peter*<sup>2</sup> intensely amusing — I like the last story best, but that is I daresay because it is new to me, and I get the sense of novelty and freshness more in it. But I like your darkest books better than the light ones — *Rachel Marr* best of all. I hope to visit that part of Cornwall this time; but I'm first going to have a time at the Lizard. You don't know all this coast, coasting from St. Ives Bay round to Mount Bay — about 80 square miles of furze, bracken and heath mixed with masses of granite. Good-bye, with our love, and (if you think of it) you might write a few lines to say how you are getting on there.

W. H. HUDSON.

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LAND'S END,  
March 15th, 1906.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your p.c. has drifted or rather fluttered on to me here where I've been staying a few days. You had best let me

<sup>1</sup> *The Prey of the Strongest*, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *The Blue Peter*, 1906.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

know a few days before you come to Cornwall, so that there will be time for me to reply and let you know how to get to me. Write to St. Luke's Road as I move about and letters are sent on every day. I'm leaving here soon — I had planned going to-morrow but shall stay over Friday just to see a gathering of sportsmen at St. Just's to-morrow. — That's near Cape Cornwall. My landlord who competes in clay-pigeon contests will drive me over in his jingle — if you know what that is. But the weather is mostly too bad here, and if the wind is what it is now I shan't go. I had thought of going back to Penzance and after a day with Hartley at St. Ives, going down to the Lizard to stay a week or so there. But I'm inclined to alter the plan now, and go to a small cove called Porthgwarra, in St. Levan Parish, close to the high cliffs of Tol-Peden-Penwith. These cliffs are just at the point where the peninsula sweeps round to Mount's Bay. The scenery is very fine there — to-day one year ago a big vessel was dashed to pieces on the rock there, and all killed but three men who were flung on to the rocks when the ship struck and the masts went crashing down. Porthgwarra is a little niche of a cove, where a few fishermen live — they have only nine boats but it is a delightful spot and the men there seem nicer and more genial than those at Sennen (Land's End). No hotel or public-house there, but lodgers are taken in some of the houses, and as the people lay themselves out for visitors in summer, I daresay one can do well enough if not afraid of a little roughness. I'm not but you have got into a confoundedly luxurious manner of life. I spent part of the day in the cove yesterday, and liked the place so much better than this that after I got

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

back I was disgusted at not having looked for a lodging there and then. Well, you must write and let me know *when* you want to make your journey, and how much impedimenta you have, as it isn't very easy getting about with much in this part *beyond the railways*. With best regards to all from

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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PAUL'S COMMERCIAL HOTEL, PENZANCE,  
*March 22nd, 1906.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

As I have not heard from you I suppose you have changed your mind about coming. Well, so far you've lost nothing, as of all the hateful weathers in England we have had the worse I fancy. A bitterly cold north-east wind since last week. Now it is changing to south and wet. I stayed on here because I haven't felt well since Saturday last, and disinclined to do anything or go about. When I went over to visit the Hartleys I found they are gone back to Dorset and will be there for the summer and are then going to live at St. Ives. They are going up to town in April. When I feel able to move out of this unpleasant place I am going to the Lizard – about Monday I think, so if you come down you will know where to find me. Porthgwarra is very nice and all that but I fancy the rush of visitors there each season – they are 'filling up' already – has given them a very high opinion of their place and a desire to make the most of those who go. The greed

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

of the people turns one rather sick. A parson in a village in that part of the country said to me the other day, 'I shall despise the Porthgwarra people as long as the world lasts.' So shall I. After leaving here the *Lizard* will be my address.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

April 12th, 1906.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your letter oddly enough finds me still here. Last week I went down with an attack of influenza which kept me in bed seven days. I'm only out to-day. I had pains and fever: and if I keep well now shall go to Penzance in a day or two. I'm rather in a hurry to be off as I want to return before the end of May.

I have now read *The Prey of the Strongest*<sup>1</sup> and after getting over the shock you give the reader at starting I found it a powerful and fascinating story, though very unpleasant. It is a brutal atmosphere, thick with sweat words, and a perpetual series of rowdy drunken scenes: and the characters too are all repellent – or all except old Wong the Chinaman. Nevertheless the story took hold of me and I thought at the end that it was one of the most powerful you have written. Certainly a far finer book than *The Colossus* or *Lord Linlithgow*. I would put it with

<sup>1</sup> *The Prey of the Strongest*, 1906.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

*Rachel Marr* or *Maurice Quain*, or near those two. The Mill itself is better than any of the human beings and supplies a sort of machinery to the tragedy, and I suppose the tragedy would have been better if all the human characters had been slain or broken by it. Pete and Quin are of course the two best characters, and are both very good: and poor Jenny is good too although not wholly convincing. The other females are rather horrible. I hope Annie will not set the critics against you.

You might let me know when you are down in the West about your plans. I shall just hang about Cape Cornwall and those parts till I finish down there.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

P.S. *By the bye, have you read* Thomas Seccombe's Survey of G. Gissing's works which appears as an introduction of over 40 pages to a volume of stories — *The House of Cobwebs* — just published by Constable? Seccombe has been very diligent and has read and examined everything, and he is a good critic — he knows Gissing's best work, his poorest, better than Wells: but somehow it is not a wholly satisfactory piece of work. He did not know Gissing and could not write of him as you could if you cared. Seccombe or Constable have sent me a copy and I am just reading it.

Have you read *A Man of Property*<sup>1</sup> yet? I see it has just gone into a second edition. Have you seen Doughty's epic — *The Dawn in Britain*? A queer original work.

It may not be out of place to remark that Hudson at

<sup>1</sup> *A Man of Property*, by John Galsworthy.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

first found *The Dawn in Britain* hard to bite on and difficult to assimilate. But after a year or two he came round and very often praised it to me. This I think was remarkable in a man of his age, since poetic taste, if it ever exists, is usually formed much earlier than any general power of literary appreciation. But it may be added that Hudson, to the end of his days, was able to take an interest in the youngest experimental Georgian poetry, even when, as so often happens, it verged on nonsense and expressed little but the writer's firm determination to attract attention at all costs.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*July 4th, 1906.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

It seems to me we are both continually hopping about all over the country. I supposed you were in the west or south, and lo, you write from Harrogate. A rather uninviting place, except that it is near Fountains Abbey and York Minster, to say nothing of Eugene Aram. But I had nice days there — very, very nice, and so should find the very name pleasant. I wonder if you see that fashionable young doctor who is a friend of Tom Robinson and is interested in Nat. History? Of course the Hotels are frightfully expensive — that's the great drawback and apartments are just as bad. I've been to old Seaford for a few days — on a visit to friends there; and lodged in Penworthen Terrace at the top of the High Street, just where you stayed with your people once. I bathed in the sea at

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

7 o'clock some mornings but the water was too cold for comfort. This week we are thinking of going to Deal for a few days — just to see if it is a place one would care to stay at. I'm doing nothing now but occasional articles and reviews for *The Speaker*. I really wanted to get back to Cornwall in July — when the *Erica vagans* will be in bloom — the heath I've never seen; and really I think by going on writing papers on that part of Cornwall I could make up a book in time. I may be able to go by the middle of the month or a little later. The Galsworthys have been staying a few days at Littlehampton, and found it very nice and quiet. 'Tis so long since I was there I almost forget what it is like. By the bye your bird must have been a pied fly-catcher. He appears occasionally in the Southern Counties.

Wishing you a happy time and good health,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

August 1st, 1906.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Pardon me for not answering your note from Littlehampton before. I'm at home and have been home some time since I was away with my wife at Deal and Canterbury some time ago. I had meant to go away again very soon, but have been hanging on owing to a confounded feeling of lassitude I can't get rid of. And I'm doing nothing except stroll about in the park and make an occa-

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

sional call. Of course I know Littlehampton but 'tis a long time since I was there. I may be going off to the Wiltshire Downs before long, but can't say when yet. I hope you are rid of your gout by this time, and doing your work. By the bye, what a good review *The Saturday* gave your *Prey of the Strongest!* Once in a while I review a book for them and wish I could do more as they pay so well.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

November 21st, 1906.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm sorry you are not better: I supposed you had gone to St. Ives, and had some hopes of meeting you there, but had to delay my trip to those distant parts. I had finally planned to be off this week, but it just happened that Rothenstein was painting my portrait and as he hopes to finish it in two or three more sittings I thought it best to give the time. He's doing it for his own pleasure and as it may be worth something to him I agreed to put off my journey. Meanwhile I'm writing some papers for *The Tribune*, etc. A book I can't do now, but if I have a couple of months in West Cornwall I may be able to do one on impressions of that part. I daresay I've read most of the tales in *The Red Burgee*. There was a very good review of it in *The Standard* two or three days ago — I hope you saw it. Galsworthy has written a book (novel) called *The Country House* which a friend who has read it says is

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

a great advance on *The Man of Property*. Hilaire is in clover just now as he was appointed Literary Editor of *The Morning Post* and gets £5 a column for his own stuff. He gave a column or more to a review of *A Crystal Age* — all about Belloc with very little about the book. *The Times* gave it a long and highly favourable review in the Supplement. I wish this weary battle of the Publishers and *The Times* would end: it amused me at first but I'm fairly sick of it now and I hope the hypocritical P. Association will be smashed. You (and the Authors' Society) will probably be on the other side. Kind remembrances to all from

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
November 24th (1906).

DEAR ROBERTS,

'Tis not easy to follow your swallow flights or long flying hops about the land without a feeling of giddiness. I had just written to you at Wadhurst when your letter comes from St. Ives — and you have been to Sidmouth in the interim! Well, I hope you will come up with flying Health and put salt on his tail! But your messages are too short — the last is a few words on a p.c. I should have liked to know more about the Hartleys — if they are in the same place and have found a house, and what they are doing, and so on — all about them.

I'm really afraid I shall not see you there as you will

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

be off long before I arrive, I'm thinking. I've engaged to sit again to Rothenstein on Tuesday next—27th, and then he may want another and perhaps two sittings to finish and that would keep me all next week and into the following one. I'm glad you are feeling better than you were a few days ago: that salt Cornish wind will perhaps do you a lot of good. To-day I went with Emily to see Arthur Rackham's pictures at the Leicester Galleries: clever and quaint but nothing very great. Then we went to the New Gallery to see the exhibition of the English Portrait Painters, my only object being to see poor Mrs. Cunningham Graham's portrait by Lavery. It is a disappointing presentment. She had an infinite sadness in her face which that dull artist, or painter of portraits, has not caught—and could not. C. G. is in London just now but I have not seen him.

Give my love to the Hartleys and do write a *letter*.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE, ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*March 10th, 1907.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your note a few days since and wish you would arrange to get better. But I'm not too well—I meant to have been back in Cornwall long before this, but my cold after getting better got worse again—a sort of influenza I fancy, and I'm here still and my local doctor advises me to keep indoors for two or three days longer. I don't see

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

that you need rush at another work so soon. Why don't you take a good long holiday — at Fowey, say, or some such place and get thoroughly round before starting work in your frantic way? It wouldn't be so bad if you could limit yourself to a small amount per day but it doesn't seem to be in you. Old Chester Waters used to tell me about a distinguished writer he knew who would write one sentence a day, and after a week or two he would make a grand spurt and do about 100 words. Do you know I think 'A Romance of Double Mountain'<sup>1</sup> the most screamingly funny thing you have ever done? But the gem of the book is 'The Difficulty with Windy Walker.' That poor lonely boy in his desolate surroundings goes to one's heart, and the whole tragedy is beautifully done and convincing. I hope some day you or some one will be able to put a *selection* of your short stories in another *King Billy of Ballarat* volume, because I think it would be the best book of short stories ever written in England. And I think so — and I say so.

Kindest regards to all from

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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LAND'S END,  
May 8th, 1907.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your letter of April 28th a few days ago — I forgot when, and shall send the Zoo tickets as soon as I get back

<sup>1</sup> *Painted Rock*, 1907.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

— in a few days I think. I must go up, and don't know that I shall be able to return this spring — perhaps never — so must make the most of my time here now. The misery will be when I find myself bound to sit down (I hate the thought of it!) to turn out something as a result of my idle ramblings. Of late I've lived pretty much out of doors, rambling on the cliffs and on the moors, listening to the chaff-chaff, or any feathered creatures we get here and in friendly talk with the natives. About the *Flying Cloud*, I'm sorry to know the reviewers have not been kind. Well, I was in Penzance on Saturday and saw *The Athenaeum* in the Library there and it has a very good notice — I'm sure you will not think that bad. Well, I'll read it soon and all the other books waiting for me — one (I hear) is *Dorothy Grey* which E. G. has sent me. It is written for private circulation and will not I daresay have much about the real Dorothy the worshipper of Nature that I knew. The writer could not know much about that part of her. The wind blows here as in no other part of the world. To-day you could not walk against it and so I'm obliged to stay indoors instead of going to Lamorna Cove as I had planned to do.

I'll tell Galsworthy when I see him what you say about his book. It will please him greatly I fancy. He's a good fellow and that's better than being merely a successful author.

With love to all,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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16 BELLAIR TERRACE, ST. IVES, CORNWALL,  
*24th, 1907.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have your p.c. and beg your pardon for not writing sooner after getting the book.<sup>1</sup> I thought I should have been able to read it soon and so put off writing but I was ill and worried trying to do something that had to be done and couldn't be done, until I got out of London. I liked it very much especially up to the struggle between the two over the letters, but after that it is too much in Henry James' manner — a dozen words spoken by one of the characters then a page or two of psychology, then another sentence and so on. I wanted the end to come differently — a violent storm between Anne and Hector to end like that between the lovers in Tennyson's lines where they meet only to say bitter things and end in a storm of tears in each other's arms. I'm just sending the book to the Hartleys. My wife read it when you sent it and thinks she likes it better than any of your books. The Hartleys have not been long back, and as their landlady had the want of sense to break her leg they couldn't go back to the same place, and are now at No. 1 Kenwyn Place, a few doors away from this. I had to come down this time just to put a young artist in the way of getting subjects to illustrate a book of mine which Hutchinson bought. I promised I would do that, altho' I think the drawings will be poor enough. I'm sorry you write so gloomily — 'ill and worried to death' — what about? Some evenings ago some one

<sup>1</sup> *Lady Anne.*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

suddenly gripped my arm and made me jump. It was Tom Robinson and we stood there in the street nearly an hour talking. A good deal about you, and he said he knew you were in much better health. I'm here for about a week so you might send me a line.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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July 16th, 1907.

I'm sorry, old man, if you'll pardon the expression, that I had no sooner sent you a letter than it came into my head I had omitted telling you of a talk I had about you a few days ago. I was lunching with Lady Bective at Eaton Place and seeing one of your books on the drawing-room table got talking with her about your writings. She asked me if I had read *Lady Anne* and then said that the dramatic possibilities of the story seemed so great she sent a copy to a Mr. Barnes who is great on that subject and asked his opinion. He replied that the story was in truth highly dramatic but he was rather puzzled to think how the influence of the dead man could be made to appear as strongly in an acted play as in the book, then finished by saying he had sent the book on to his sister Irene Vanbrugh, to read and give her opinion. I told her I believed you had some intentions of dramatizing the book, and that I would tell you what she had said. This pleased her and she said it would delight her to know you, and would I not go with you to lunch with her one day? Well, that's

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

for you to decide. There were some other ladies there and they had all read and been much taken with *Lady Anne*, especially one lady of title whose title I didn't catch when we were introduced, who sat next me at the table and also had a strong idea the story would make a fine play. By-the-way, you say you've been at Forest Row, Sussex — well, I've just had a letter from Ella Fuller-Maitland at 'Cherry Orchard' just to congratulate me because the Government are going to take up and help poor Sir F. Banbury's Bill in Parliament to suppress bird taking with fish-hooks as the St. Ives custom is.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

September 15th, 1907.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Do you know that Constable's are going to publish a volume of Gissing's letters<sup>1</sup> to his friend Bertz? Seccombe, who told me about it, has read the letters: there are many enough to make a good book — tremendously long and very intimate, containing a full minute history of the whole miserable affair of the first marriage. I asked Seccombe if Bertz knows anything about Gissing's early life — his Owens' College days, and if any allusions to that

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Otto Kyllman of Messrs. Constable's tells me that this is a mistake. The book was to be a life of Gissing. Bertz, a German and a very remarkable character, was a friend of Gissing's for many years.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

part of his career appear in the letters. He said No – and then told me that *he* (Seccombe) knows the whole story of Gissing's early trouble, that he had it from a friend – Tate<sup>1</sup> – who was master of the college in Gissing's time. He says there are some passages he intends striking out in the letters in which Gissing criticizes some of his contemporaries in an unpleasant way; Hardy is one he mentioned. He appears to despise Hardy, S. says, because he was not passionately devoted to the classics like Meredith. As Madame Gissing knows about this volume of letters you too may know all about it. The question is what are you going to do about your MS.? – or have you quite given up the idea of the book about Gissing you started so long ago? I only wish you would do it and bring it out before the Bertz letters. It seems to me from all I hear from literary people I know that there is a very keen and an increasing interest in Gissing and his life and I believe a book from you on the subject would excite a good deal of attention.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*September 20th, 1907.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

– it would of course be very nice but of course I can't go. I'm quite tied to town just now and when able to

<sup>1</sup> A mistake. Dr. Greenwood was Principal of Owens at that time.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

get away shall have to take my wife somewhere. I had made up my mind to go to America for a few weeks but shall not go if we go away soon together — it will be too late at the end of October. I can't imagine why you didn't say anything in reply to my letter about Constable's intended publication of Gissing's letters to Bertz. The other day I read Seccombe's long introduction to Smollett's travels in France and Italy, included by Frowde in their series of classics, in which he mentions a number of books of travel which have a special charm. I told him he had omitted some of the best travel books ever written, and named *The Western Avernus* and *Sea-faring*, etc. He said he agreed with me about those books and was very sorry he had omitted them — he only put down the names of the books which came into his mind at the moment of writing. It was a very careless list — I told him Belt's *Nicaragua* should have been included, and he swore he had done so! But he hadn't — he had named *Bent* as one of the charming travel writers. Bent for Belt! All he could say was 'Another howler to my credit.'

I'm glad you are in such a delightful spot and if you are having the weather we are getting here you are very fortunate.

I'm sorry to hear of Naomi being ill.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

45

MALMESBURY,

May 5th, 1908.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your letter just when I was starting from town to Wantage and was very sorry to hear your father had died. It is ever thus: no sooner has the man passed away beyond recall than all the actions and qualities associated in our minds with the thoughts of him begin to fade away and vanish, and then the invisible writing comes out—the graces and virtues we thought nothing about—not even knowing that they existed perhaps. Death is the illuminator, they say, but it is not so—it merely drags us as far away from the truth on one side as we have been before on the other.

I came on here to-day and am dawdling about the Abbey, and climbing to the roof just now saw 5 miles away the very tall and very thin spire of Telbury Church. A place of memories for me—it was there I went on first coming to England on a visit to the family of a S. American friend of mine, a very fine fellow who took to drink and went to the dogs. After long years I feel inclined to cycle over and look up these old friends, or shed a tear over their ashes if they are all dead. It is all a nice quiet pretty green country—greener than anything else in nature—but for some reason, possibly because I have been so much in harsh rough west Cornwall it doesn't satisfy me. I was at the *Walküre* last Friday and had a stall if I liked for all four performances, but I gave up *Götterdämmerung* to come away on this

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

jaunt. I hope to get back for *Tristan* which I have never heard. *Die Walküre* is most wonderful.

Kindest remembrances.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE, ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

May 28th, 1908.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Will you kindly post the book to Conrad (Joseph) – Someries, Luton, Beds. and greatly oblige? It is not my fault – I handed the books each with the right address to the clerk at Hutchinson's to post. Conrad promptly returned his (yours) copy to Hutchinson and I am writing to him to send it on to you.

The St. Ives people are very angry with me for exposing their bird-torturing practices, I see in to-day's *Telegraph*. I'm very glad they are angry: perhaps they will now mend their ways a little.

I hope you are getting on all right, in better health and able to work.

I was in the Academy an hour to-day and saw Hartley's big Corfu Castle – I'm afraid he has rather spoilt it since I saw him working on it, but I can't well tell him so – he is just now at 80 Redcliffe Square as you perhaps know. I shall go to see him (or them) on Tuesday afternoon, I hope. Our old friend of the Land's End has also got a picture in the R.A. – a very nice landscape –

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

a coast scene with the Logan Rock headland in the distance.

Kindest remembrances to all.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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SALISBURY,

*May 30th (1908).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

We had an hour yesterday (early in the day) at Bailie's Gallery and enjoyed your pictures very much. I like some of your Venetian and Grand Canary subjects best, but they are all good. We were pretty confident of seeing you there as it was the opening day and you disappointed us by not appearing. I think you might come round sometimes on a Wednesday afternoon, but next Wednesday I shall be away. I shall go to Warminster or some village on the Wylie I think to stay a few days and then come back next Friday or Saturday for a week-end at the Tennants' at Wilsford — 8 miles from here up the Avon. The only other guest will be Sir Edward Grey. Lady Tenant's devoted to Wiltshire and has written a book or two about the village people, and she is a nice and pretty woman. . . . By the bye, what a curious taste for colour Bevan the Sussex man has! His rainbow horse drawing a crimson plough followed by a magenta ploughman over a purple field strikes one as good in spite of and because of the colours. Masefield appears to have made

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

a considerable success with his play: I wish I had seen it but he didn't give me tickets.

I hope I've got your address right — I'm away from my address book here. With remembrances to all,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

July 16th, 1908.

DEAR ROBERTS,

At last I've heard from you, for I had been wondering these many days where *you* were, you being always the greatest wanderer. And you've been to beloved Simonsbath — ah, fool that I was, in not recording my impressions and adventures in that spot long ago: they would have served me well just now when I am putting together my impressions of places during my many rambles on foot about the Southern counties. Memory — 'that which you forget with' as the school-boy said, is no good. I have been in Wiltshire only, and must stick to that county now — the down district, or Salisbury Plain. I was at Stonehenge (with about 500 more) on the morning of June 21st to see the sun rise. I went at one o'clock in the morning to wait for it, but as usual a cloud no bigger than a man's hand appeared at 3 o'clock and blotted all the east out.

I've just received a delightful letter from a gentleman at Camborne, inviting me on behalf of the Literary Society to go and discuss Cornish character with the Cambornites,

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

who will be delighted to meet me face to face and hear what I have to say to justify my charges against the people of Cornwall. They want me to know what Cornishmen really are, etc., etc. The Cambornites have a name for roughness: they very nearly killed Will Thorne<sup>1</sup> when he went to meet them face to face, and I shall have to ask you to come with your gun to back me up. On the other hand the Editor of the Penzance paper *The Cornishman* has just concluded a series of 5 long articles on my book and tho' he begins by being a little angry he concludes that he is now convinced of my perfect sincerity and much more in my praise. Well, if I don't see you sooner come on Wednesday.

Kindest regards to all.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

November 13th, 1908.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I had hoped to see you before now as talking is better than writing — at all events I find writing a rather detestable business. I was in hopes of seeing you here on Wednesday. I was going to Wells when I got your book<sup>2</sup> so left it behind as I was going to hold communion with nature in the form of wild geese newly arrived on our

<sup>1</sup> General Secretary of the National Union of General Workers.

<sup>2</sup> *David Bran*, 1908.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

shores from Nova Zembla — or Zemblya if the geese prefer it so — and I could not disturb my mind with a tale of human passions. Someone said to me the other day Morley Roberts is a poet and a modern novel is not his medium. Well, I find that I can't read a book like this or *Rachel Marr* as I would read a novel by Norris or anyone else for that matter. It is too charged with passion all through and cannot be enjoyed if read straight off. I read two or three chapters and put it down as I would read a long poem. Reading it that way as a poem, a strange romance, I thought it a splendid work. But regarded as a 'modern novel' I find incredible things in it. Lou is a magnificent creature but all the Lous I have known were good haters as well as lovers and Lou has too little of that power. It is also incredible to me that she should refuse to marry David, but that I daresay is a question we should never agree about. Both matters may be controversial: but I can't believe in Mrs. Bran's sudden change of heart at the end. She hated her enemy with a proper hatred and nothing could take that black rage out of her heart. On that account I think the end wrong. But it is a grand book all the same and I daresay it will be considered a 'bold' one, tho' I can't understand why, seeing that a large proportion of the male men are David Brans in their ideas — and actions. It is no new notion, but it has probably not been so forcibly presented before.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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PENZANCE,

*March 31st (1909).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I never can tell what I am going to do. I returned from the Lizard thinking I would go up to town, but have been looking round here and yesterday at Cape Cornwall went out on the water a little. There's a tiny cove there and a few boats, mostly belonging to miners who work at the Lavant Mine at Pendean a few miles away. I managed to find a man in the neighbourhood who owned a boat and he lent it and I got two fellows who were ploughing to go out with me. We went round the Brisons – a mile and a half out, and tho' yesterday the sea was calmer than it has been this fortnight or more it was quite lumpy enough for such a small boat when we got round on the further side of the rocks. Birds built on the rocks and I heard the French crabbers when they are fishing on our side make a clean sweep of all the young birds and eggs, so am going to try and devise some way to protect the spot. I am much amused to see in the statistics of crime Cornwall is put down as the most virtuous county except in one particular – offences against morality! A most moral and unmoral county! I *may* be going back to town next week to come again to Cornwall for the month of April, I hope, but I'll keep you informed, and you must write in a few days – to 40 – and say how you are getting on at the Hydro and how soon you are going to leave it. I'm not too well myself.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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5 CATHEDRAL GREEN, WELLS, SOMERSET,

*April 30th (1909).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I left home near the end of March: was at Savernake, then at Bristol and neighbourhood, and came here a fortnight ago. A delightful little city and shall leave it with sorrow at the end of the week. I think of going to Bridgwater, then to the Quantocks, and if it proves possible, across Exmoor to Devon. But I make no plans, and just as I drifted here, I shall ramble I don't know where. I have my proofs<sup>1</sup> to do and it doesn't matter much where I do them. I have visited Glastonbury, Weston-super-Mare, etc., and been up and down the Cheddar valley several times, but have not seen the famous caves yet: probably shall not trouble to see them. It is a beautiful country here: such pastures and fine hills: and the Cathedral here is wonderfully beautiful. The West Front I admire especially; it is so richly decorated that over two hundred jackdaws find comfortable nesting holes behind the statues that stand in niches all the way up, from Bishops to Kings, Queens, Angels, Apostles, and, finally, Christ seated in glory: alas: he has been broken off in the middle of his body, and only his legs left. Many of the Angels have lost their noses, and some of the Apostles have only one arm. But the effect is very fine.

I am glad you are flourishing so much, and sorry you are ill – but that is – well – chronic. Shall be here till next Saturday.

Yours always,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *Afoot in England, 1909.*

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THE GEORGE HOTEL, CODFORD, WILTS.,

August 2nd, 1909.

MY DEAR ROBERTS,

I daresay you are back in town by now — we were not very far apart when you were at the old Swan at Wells. If I hadn't been so tied to my work and rather short of cash I would have flown to see you — and the beloved old Cathedral with you. It has many memories, and I know some good people there: and how Gissing loved it! By the bye, I had a letter from Algernon<sup>1</sup> the other day, from Edinburgh. He has sent me a book which I have not seen yet. I've read little — not even the papers — for months past: but a few days ago Trench sent me his *Apollo and the Seaman*, which is a good poem. I daresay I'll come on *Midsummer Madness* when I get back: — I'm going up this week for a few days to take my wife away somewhere, and as I haven't done with Wiltshire yet we may come to a village somewhere near Warminster. I daresay I shall see you in town.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

January 6th, 1910.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I intended calling round at the Club one day this week

<sup>1</sup> Algernon Gissing.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

after I got your letter, but must leave it till next week as we go to Brighton for the week-end to-morrow morning. Just to get away from this everlasting gloom. Can't you drop in next Wednesday afternoon? Since I finished my book on Wiltshire Downland in November I've done nothing — except try to make myself well with sour milk: I used Metchnikoff's preparation: but after three weeks I've had to give it up as it only upsets me and doesn't do any good at all. I believe in it, but think it can't be suited to some constitutions. I'm sure I gave it a fair trial as I've been most careful about diet, and have not touched wine or stout or spirits all the time I've been using it, and eating only the most simple and wholesome food — very little meat. A day or two ago I saw Stephen Reynolds — the author of *A Poor Man's House* — and he told me he tried it for a month and it had made him worse, so he gave it up and got well again. I think it would do me a lot of good to see this damnable government turned out — Ananias and the Heavenly Twins and the rest of them.

Kind regards to all in which my wife joins.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

June 21st, 1910.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for p.c. in which you don't give the address in the north, so must send this to St. John's Wood Park.

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I should have written sooner to thank you for the last book<sup>1</sup> but have been away, in Dorset this time, Blandford and Wimborne and Poole way, and have just now read the first story 'The Girl from Philadelphia' but must read the others again. I'm not sure that I have read them all in the magazines and so don't know which is the best. But the 'Girl' is a very good story to make a melancholy man laugh himself into a better state of body and mind. I am going away just now into Somerset, but as I shall have to return to London in a few days I hope to see you when you get back and find out when you are going to Exmoor. I've long been pining to go there myself and may be able to manage it shortly.

Have you seen a novel called *The Shadow of a Titan*? It is by a young man, his first book, a Wedgwood, of the Josiah Wedgwood family and is rather remarkable as he gives a very lurid and powerful picture of a S. American Republic in a state of war. The chief character is that of a Dictator, de la Camara, a horrible monster, almost incredible, but powerfully drawn.

I am still very queer in health, and can't get on with my work at present. I must give up my hope of having a second book ready for the autumn season now — there isn't time to get it done, I fear.

With best regards to Mrs. Roberts,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *Sea-Dogs*, 1910.

# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

55

40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD W.,

July 15th, 1910.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I find I can't get away in time to meet you at Simonsbath, so must give up Exmoor this time. I'm sorry as it is long since I had a spell with you out of town and the atmosphere of oppressive London. We renew ourselves when we get out of it. At all events I do, as thoroughly as if I had sloughed off a frayed and rusty envelope and come out like a ring-snake in new green and gold. I have just been reading the new number of *Hibbert's Journal* which contains three deeply interesting articles, one by Prof. W. James on a 'Pluralistic Mystic,'<sup>1</sup> which I wish you could read when you come back. Lately I have been reading James and though he can't make me a Pragmatist I find more enjoyment in him than in any other philosopher I ever met. But poor W. James is in a bad way: he has been at some health place in Germany but got so bad that Henry James had to go over to him and is taking him to America. I believe they arrive in London to-day and sail in about a fortnight. Their younger brother has just died in America, very suddenly, and Henry James is frightfully cut up about it but dares not tell his brother for fear that it would be too great a shock in his condition. His heart is very bad. One loves them both, whether one knows them personally or not, and can't but feel very much for them.

I don't know if you read the Suffrage debate in the

<sup>1</sup> W. James. 'A Pluralistic Mystic.' *Hibbert's Journal*, July, 1910.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Commons but there were a good many fine speeches delivered. The weakest were certainly those in favour of the bill — Balfour, Lyttelton and the rest. But what brilliant speeches on the other side! I have actually read some of them twice over, though I seldom read a speech. Well, we are on opposite sides in this, so I'll say no more as it might hurt your feelings.

Good-bye.

W. H. HUDSON.

I hope you have had good days on the Barle.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*November 7th, 1912.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I've just returned from Wells-next-the-Sea to find your book<sup>1</sup> awaiting me here: and I've just read it nearly all through with intense and painful interest. There are things in it which make one feel very bad and which, when I come to them, make me wish you had never attempted this thing. Then, when they are over, I read on and begin to think that if it ever had to be — I mean a true life of G. G. then it was best that it should be done now, by you, and have the matter done with once for all. There is an ever-lasting half-whispered sort of tittle-tattle going on about poor G., and this book will lay that to rest without a doubt. Only when one gets down to the very bottom, the very deepest depths of such a life (if the deepest depths

<sup>1</sup> *The Private Life of Henry Maitland, 1912.*

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

can't be effectually hidden) can one know – and forgive; and from that depth we begin to ascend, and to know so much that one begins to wonder how one dared to forgive! The bitter thing is that those who are related to him will never see it in this light – never believe that it was best to have it all out about the man, and they will hate and curse you for it.

I don't know where you are and so will address to  
A. C.

With love,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*March 27th, 1913.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have been going to write for the last two or three days, but this perpetual worry of my wife's condition puts me off everything. I can't say about April 2nd, but if it's possible for me to get out at that hour I shall be delighted to meet Clodd at your place. However, I don't think it will be possible. We are waiting day after day for better weather to get down to Worthing.

I read the book<sup>1</sup> straight off with very great pleasure. The title story I liked least. It is not on the same level as 'The Air from Verdi.' That, I think, is great. Did you notice in *Shadows out of The Crowd*<sup>2</sup> (if you have read it) that such cases as the one you relate have a tremendous

<sup>1</sup> *Gloomy Fanny*, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> By Richard Curle.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

fascination for Curle? Many of the subjects relate to abnormal states of mind right up to insanity. *The Man in the Barn* is another great story: there's that in it which appeals to every person — which cannot be said of the Gloomy Fanny story. In *The Beatus Page* you have set the old Jekyll and Hyde problem from the pathologist or scientist, and you make it very interesting although it remains incredible. The trouble with it, as a story, is that one immediately recognized it not as a story but a pathological study, and then one knows how the meek Rev. John will break out and play hell. You might take the parson in Leeds who threw himself over Flamborough Head, or fell over, and then turned up with Miss Grimes in some other place, as a subject for another.

The flying machine story gives one good thrills and is a good yarn but that doesn't make the same universal appeal as the Man in the Barn story. I don't know whether you imagined it — the sensations of the man who goes up for the first time — or had something you were told to go on? You almost make one think that you had been up yourself. Well, may it be a success.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

I'll send you a line a day or two before the second of April to let you know.

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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THISTLE HOUSE, FURZE PLATT, MAIDENHEAD,

*July 31st, 1913.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

It is long since I heard from you — July 7th in a letter in which you criticize my handwriting and say you intend going away on the 22nd for a fortnight, but don't say where. Well, I should have written before but had no news and everything goes on just the same — my wife makes very little progress and I am not up to much. If this letter should be sent after you or you should still be in London, please let me have *Marriage* (Strindberg) back if you've still got it. I want to read it now and any other of Strindberg I can get, especially the autobiographical ones. Not that I'm very much interested in *him* but I'm interested in women's attitude towards him. I've read the *Confessions of a Fool*, a painful book which made one blush for one's (male) sex — a prolonged howl and screech of rage against his wife, a furious blackening of her character, mixed with kisses and worship of her hair, her arms, her lovely feet and ankles, and so on. Now here's a curious thing. It is women who are devoted to Strindberg and exalt him so much higher than he deserves, and among them you will find the most advanced women — those who regard themselves as not only the equals but the superiors of men. Yet they know that Strindberg despised woman's intellect and hated her pretensions with a furious hatred! How do you explain it? Well, you will deny the facts — the admiration of advanced women. I've taxed two or three advanced women with it — and they — shuffle out of it the

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

best way they can. One day last week when up in town I lunched with Miss Lind-af-Hageby who is in the very front of advanced women and who has devoured every line of Strindberg's 40 or 50 volumes and has written her book about him. I asked her how she, knowing his scorn and contempt for women better than any one, would explain (her) extraordinary regard for him. She said it was her interest in drama and literature! Well, I'm not such a simple juggins as to accept that as the true reason. Another remark she made, speaking on other subjects, throws a little light on her attitude towards Strindberg. She said that the most perfect man was to her the man who had most woman in him. Well, isn't Strindberg more than half woman? Could anyone who was not half woman despise woman as he does! There I'll leave the question for the present – but I warn 'advanced' women not to bother me more about Strindberg. Don't forget *Marriage* anyhow.

I didn't return you the letter I found so difficult to be typed because I managed to decipher it after a few weeks' study. What you say about not knowing me reminds me of the very last words my favourite brother (now dead) said to me when we parted on the boat: 'Of all the people I know you are the only one I have never known.'

Farewell,

W. H. HUDSON

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*December 29th, 1913.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for p.c. We are no better than when I wrote last: my wife pretty much the same. I'm worse than ever and don't think I'll ever get round again. Dr. Tom says that if he sent me to a specialist he would order an operation — and that for me would be the end. I couldn't live through it. I daresay he knows that too.

Well, I hope your big gloomy book<sup>1</sup> will be a success. You will no doubt be going off somewhere for a rest and change. Unless you go abroad it can't be anywhere at this season but Cornwall. Would that I could go there! I have just had a letter from Miss Carter — do you remember how nice she and all of them were to us when we went there and had tea and talk and laughter? *He* died a couple of years ago, and now Mrs. Carter has just died, and poor Miss Carter says she can no longer endure to live there any longer.

Please give my best regards to Naomi and wishing you both a good New Year.

Yours in all affection,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *Time and Thomas Waring*, 1914.

MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*March 13th, 1914.*

MY DEAR ROBERTS,

Many thanks for your Thomas Waring. I daresay it will be rather painful to me to read of a great operation like that in present circumstances but I'll try to forget my own case and look at the book as a work of art. Oddly enough the book and a review of the book (in the *D.T.*) came pretty well at the same moment. The details of the operation appear to have got a little on the reviewer's nerves, but for the rest he appears to feel the book's greatness. I hope it will be a success. I'm still very bad with my 'stammering' heart and a weak digestion.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

When you want Zoo tickets let me know — *say week day or Sunday.*

P.S. The blue book with full debate on the Plumage Bill just received — we hope it will be law by April!

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*April 19th (1914).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

We go to Worthing Tuesday morning and I'm sending some Zoo tickets as you are now back. I'm making very slow progress so far — can't walk much and don't sleep

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

well. I shall have to come up in 3 or 4 days too, and I daresay while at Worthing the journeys to town will be about twice a week. But I'm in hopes of getting quite away — to Devon or Cornwall before long. I'm taking my wife down in the hope of finding some place where she could exist without me: but it will be a difficult thing to find, as she won't hear of going to one of the invalid or nursing homes, and of course they are dreary places to stay in. Other news I have none: your book was rather too painful to me at all events after passing through such an awful experience as I did. I may write about it by and bye.

Yours with best regards to Naomi,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,  
*July 5th, 1914.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm here just now. I took my wife to Seaford and after 3 weeks she could stand it no longer so we came back and I am now hunting for a spot somewhere inland not too far from London. The only one I have seen that looks promising is at or near Maidenhead and we may go there in a day or two. She doesn't make any real progress, tho' now slightly better than a month ago.

Yes, I duly received your letter and felt grateful to you for the pleasant things I am sure you say in it; — but oddly enough I coul'dn't read it! I took it to the sea-side and

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

tried it there — after a good deal of wind — but it still remained dark. Even at its best your writing is a bit difficult. On this occasion you had got hold of a thick pen — or maybe one of those engines called a fountain pen: — and the ink was too thick and the writer in a hurry, and all this in conjunction made it a sort of garrapata writing, as we say in S. America. Why should you imagine your new book will be a dead failure? Because you are tired, I suppose. Well — wait and see. Perhaps it will turn out as good a thing as you ever did. One can't say anything too severe nowadays — or offensive as you put it. Have you seen the Woman and Morality article (by a Mother) in *The English Review*. I fancy the husband guided her pen — or at all events gave her the facts. She has made the discovery that a woman can have only one child a year while a man can have a hundred. With best wishes for the new book and love.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

P.S. Sorry I rebuked you for your bad writing.  
How's this?

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TOWER HOUSE,

August 19th, 1914.

MY DEAR ROBERTS,

Hearty 'congrats.' You have certainly come out strong. You are about neck to neck with W. W.<sup>1</sup> and ahead of all

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Watson.

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

the others. The other day the joke was ‘where is the poet laureate?’ Then he appeared with two lyrics, but it was cruel for the mocking journalists to ask for something stirring from that hand; even in his young days his blood was tepid and now he’s an old man. Now the joke is ‘What are we waiting for? Why, Mr. Kipling, of course.’ Well, there are plenty more – Sturge Moore, Abercrombie and Gibson to mention the three biggest. I’m glad your three have appeared in the best paper.

I’m only up for the day. I’ve been pretty ill all the time and have been staying at Grey Friars, Ascot, the Ranee’s country house. It is a beautiful place in a pine-wood with another larger pine-wood (Lady Stepney’s) in which I walk every day and watch the birds. The Ranee<sup>1</sup> is away with the old Rajah, who is half crazy about the war, at Cirencester. I am absolutely alone, except for the six servants in the house; a silent house surrounded by silent woods. I go back to-morrow and shall probably finish my visit next week and then go back to Worthing where my wife’s still staying. The only visitor I have is Miss Ponsonby who trots in from old Lady P.’s house close by to see me and discuss the news. She is sister to Arthur Ponsonby – not *your* man – but the wild young aristocrat radical M.P. who brought in a bill to abolish titles! also of Major Ponsonby who left England at midnight only six days ago and is now perhaps getting killed in Belgium; also of the other brother who is Equerry to the King and his great friend. I hope you are well. My wife is pretty much the same as usual but better than when she was in London. I wish I could get round a little to finish the work I have in

<sup>1</sup> H.H. Margaret of Sarawak.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

hand — revising and altering 2 or 3 of my old bird books for new editions. The Publishers I suppose will have to keep them until next year. Please give my best regards to Naomi.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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THE COTTAGE, PARK ROAD, WORTHING,

*November 15th, 1914.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm here just now and have been practically living at Ascot these three or four months past. I was in London a day or two ago, and shall probably be back about Wednesday: but can't be sure as I've got a cold, and may have to go and look for a place for my wife in Bournemouth. She doesn't want to go but I fear it will be too cold here for the winter. I'll let you know when I'm in town or go and see you but it isn't easy for me to get about. I was at the Zool. Library one day last week and had a talk with Chalmers Mitchell about instinct and intelligence in animals. He can be very interesting when he likes. Poor old Roberts! At Ascot I hear much about him as his house is close to where I stay and he is everybody's favourite — the wounded soldiers at the Grand Stand Hospital, about 70 or 80, will miss him tremendously as he went in to see them every day.

Ever yours and love to Naomi,

W. H. HUDSON.

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# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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THE COTTAGE, PARK ROAD, WORTHING,

*December 20th, 1914.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your letter and MS. has been sent on here. I have been here five weeks now and am not yet allowed by the doctor to leave my bedroom. Bronchitis, dyspeptic trouble, weak heart — there you are. I must obey or run the risk of going out altogether.

How I envy you and Naomi at St. Ives! If you see the Hartleys give them my love. There are other souls dear to me there and in the villages near, but it would not be easy to send messages to them. By the bye do you know Daniel the basket maker down on the Quay — the total abstainer religious radical? If you can take a peep into his vast deep picturesque work-shop down there, please say I send him greetings.

I can't do any work just now — and little use do I find in doing anything as the editors tell me they can't promise to use anything they accept for months to come — perhaps not till after the war.

I will look at your poems with the impossible title, when I am in the mood, during some lucid interval: but unfortunately just now my mind is in such a state of exasperation, against the universe and all those in it that nothing really pleases me, and if your poetry is not superlatively good it will not stir me much. I think Masefield's *Philip the King* would have struck me as exceedingly fine at normal times, but it moves me but languidly now. The war has been playing havoc with several of our young poets. Rupert

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Brooke is fighting somewhere in the trenches, I hear. Lascelles Abercrombie, with nothing to do for publishers, and a family to keep, has taken refuge with a sister of Hewlett in Lincolnshire. Hodgson, another young poet of my acquaintance, has got the Polignac prize for his 'Bull' — I don't know if you saw it. My wife is not so well as she was during the summer: her eyesight is failing her so much that she can't knit or read now.

With love to you both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

You, or Naomi, might send me a few lines from Cornwall. I will return the MS. to Manor Park one day after Christmas.

66

THE COTTAGE, PARK ROAD, ASCOT,  
*March 29th, 1915.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I had thought your book<sup>1</sup> a novel and was rather surprised on opening it to find it a book of tales which I had read before — all except Judith. However I read them again with enjoyment and liked Judith best, probably because it was new to me.

The place is still full of troops here, but on Wednesday next they are going to march off to Maidstone. But what a change in their appearance since they came last September — a herd of 28 thousand recruits, labourers, clerks,

<sup>1</sup> *Sweet Herbs and Bitter, 1915.*

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

hooligans from London slums, and all sorts, half of them wretched-looking beings, thin and pale. Now they are marvellously 'plumped out' brown and jolly. There are about 12,000 of them billeted in the Worthing houses; the rest are at Shoreham, Portslade and other villages. The aeroplanes are about here every day — generally flying very high now.

Perhaps you hear some of the truth of things from the front, which is kept out of the papers. About Neuve Chapelle, a most lamentable business. French acted against the advice of Joffre and Kitchener, but would have been all right if his officers had not blundered terribly. Our men were mowed down wholesale by our own guns. Smith-Dorrien and two other unhappy generals have been recalled. Not a word of all this is allowed to appear in the papers. We know what Sir Frank Swettenham would say: 'If it is something it would distress the public to hear, why should we let the public hear it? Besides what will be will be and so why should one bother about it?'

I think of starting to Cornwall about the 10th of April and to visit the different spots I know where I've stayed before.

I'm not well yet and can't get well, but am rather better than I've been for some months past. My wife is much better now, and doesn't worry which shows her nerves are getting strong again. Shall be here till Monday next.

With love,  
Yours,  
W. H. HUDSON.

# MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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GREY FRIARS, ASCOT,

July 26th, 1915.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your letter Friday afternoon just when I was starting off to come down here. I haven't been well this long time past. I was at Worthing staying with my wife who is about the same as usual not strong but fairly well, and then had a few days in London. Since getting back here I have felt rather better and am at work. I get a few articles in magazines and weeklies from time to time and have half a dozen out now. As for books I couldn't get one placed while the war lasts. I'm not surprised you are trying to get some job with the forces: that seems to be what everyone is trying for. Masefield has been out a long time doing hospital work. Granville Barker has just got a billet of some kind.

I hope to be able to see Vachell's play — you don't say what the title is.

I don't know who it is who strokes the lions and tigers in the Zoo: I never heard of it before: but I rarely go to the Gardens. Next time I go to the Zool. Library I'll ask Mitchell about it. Have you read Solsgub (beautiful name!) the last Russian novelist to be translated? The critics have hailed him joyfully as they have now been instructed to hail everything from Russia: but I find it rot. Fantastic morbid ideas put in the form of little tales and sketches.

With best regards to Naomi,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Before I went to Worthing I tried one Sunday afternoon to get to you and was taken by a bus from some city station to Belsize Road — it took me two hours to get there — and then I was told there was no B.P.G. but some one said there was such a place 2 or 3 miles from where I was! So I went home again.

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GREY FRIARS, ASCOT,

*September 26th, 1915.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I received your letter just when starting for the weekend here. I had hoped you were well by now and am sorry your cough has kept you laid up so long. I should think you were better equipped for the Social Physiology at present than when the idea of such a book first came into your mind. When you have it — or the first half say — ready I would like to see it, but I don't suppose my criticism will be very helpful as the work is on a subject so familiar to you and rather strange to me. But if you succeed in getting hold of all the experts you want that I should think would be very useful. I should think Chalmers Mitchell would be the best biologist you could find for such a purpose. He doesn't specialize too much and he is very wide-minded in his last works — *The Childhood of Animals* and *Evolution and the War*.

My health keeps about the same — I can't get over this heart weakness, and never shall now. In October I may go to Lelant again: I can if I like as I have the offer of a

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

seat in the Ranee's car, but it will depend on my state of health.

I hope you'll be able to go away soon before the weather begins to get cold.

With best regards,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

It may be noted that Hudson was always intensely interested in the theory of the Social Organism and the proposal to treat its growth and disorders physiologically and pathologically. Ever since seeing a book which I wrote and put aside as merely tentative work he urged me to continue and frequently assured me that I had no business to write novels at all.

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GREY FRIARS, ASCOT,

*October 7th, 1915.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am still here — a lengthy stay but it was compulsory. I got worse and worse until my hostess sent for the Ascot doctor, who disapproved of the treatment I was undergoing and I submitted myself to him — with many sad doots. But he proved a wise man and just what he told me would result is coming to pass. The awful oppression and difficulty of breathing I was suffering has gradually gone: also the aches and pains: gradually my strength is coming back and appetite and all other signs of being rid of the poison he said was in me. Now I begin to work

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

again and I hope I may get as far as Worthing this week to see my wife. She has been going on fairly well — well enough to be working at woollen knitted garments for the soldiers, like everybody else. But she has been tremendously anxious about my health. Well, when I get back to London I'll try and pay you and Naomi a visit. I'm glad you are better and at work — there's nothing like it to keep one going — unless it tempts one to smoke too much. I shall love to see your poems. Can't Nash bring out a small vol? — poetry is more read now than in the past when you gave it up after that first small collection.

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL, HAYLE, CORNWALL,

*December 15th, 1915.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am here in a nursing home, as the doctor — not McClure but a local man — told me it was necessary for me to lie in bed for some time to get my heart a little steadier. I had thought that would have to come and had made inquiries about a house and found that this was the best if not the only one in this neighbourhood, so I came here ten days ago and the doctor says I am improving. Well, he is right in some ways but I still have had almost sleepless nights. Dr. McClure changed his medicine three times and I continued to get worse. He advised me to consult the local doctor. He too is a Scotsman and a

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

very clever fellow, W. Hamilton. He had a fine practice in a town in the Midlands, which he had to throw up and come south owing to his wife's health. She couldn't live there so he came to Hayle where she got well, but in the meantime he had made his mark here and is now looked on as the one good doctor in this part of Cornwall. The nursing home and hospital are connected with the church and convent here — Roman Catholics of course. The next room to mine is now occupied by a priest, and the Bishop of Southwark is a guest this week. But religion doesn't come into the nursing part of the business and the doctor, Hamilton, is a Free Kirk person. I don't know how long I shall be here. I have a few visitors — the Ranee comes in most days — and I can do some work in bed. With love to you both.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL, HAYLE, CORNWALL,  
*Christmas Day, 1915.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for p.c. I'm getting on very well: in fact I haven't felt so well for a year past, but the Doctor says I mustn't stir for another week. I am not going to think about what I'm to do after coming out. Sufficient unto the day, etc. At present I can do as much lying or sitting in bed as when up and about: and I may elect to stay on a month longer here or at Lelant before thinking of London.

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

In another month I shall have some work to dispose of, and in the meantime I'm getting articles in weeklies and monthly magazines. I haven't seen the Hartleys for 3 or 4 weeks — he was unwell a few days ago when he had planned to come over and see me, but Norah writes they are coming to visit me on Tuesday next. Hartley has occupied himself lately in making scrap-books for the men in the trenches. They are simply composed of good pictures and illustrations of all kinds from old books and magazines. The books are highly appreciated by the Tommies, and when I get to London I can send him a huge pile I've collected. If *you* have any you can spare send them to him. I'm having quite a run of visitors to see me these days — Rectors, priests, library ladies, and so on — among them Havelock Ellis, a man I like very well: the work he is engaged on at present is on the Psychology of the European nations — a work he has had for years in his mind.

Please give my remembrances to Clodd, and with love to you and Naomi,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL, HAYLE, CORNWALL,

February 29th, 1916.

DEAR ROBERTS,

You ask me on your p.c. to send you a p.c. to tell you where I am. Well, I haven't a p.c. because I don't use 'em and don't like 'em, and when a friend sends me one I say Why the devil can't he write me a b — y letter instead

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

of a line on a b - y p.c. But for the sender of the p.c. it has this tremendous advantage that you can't say anything on it since there's no room. I am still here in the hospital and have not in these three months been downstairs. However, to-day I've forgotten my own troubles and case in the thought of poor Henry James. You know he was unconscious a long time after his stroke, or at all events, didn't know anyone. Then, when consciousness did return, his memory of recent times or years was gone and he was ten or more years behind the times, so to say. He was always wondering why his brother William hadn't arrived from America to see him as he was so ill. I got news about him from time to time from someone who was at his bedside most of the time. I'm sorry he's dead: he's a great loss though not so great a loss as his brother.

I'm going to try and get away from here next week one day, if the weather turns warmer meanwhile, to stay in apartments I've engaged in Lelant, so if you should write the address will simply be Lelant, as I'm pretty well known there. In fact I know most of the people and the only thing I fear is that I shall have too many people to be friendly and ask me to their houses. But here I can't see the people I know at St. Ives, owing to the nuisance of the railway changes. The Hartleys come occasionally but would like it better if I were at Lelant. Then, too, the Galsworthies — he and she — are coming to the Tregenna Castle Hotel for 3 weeks, to be near me, they say, and I can see them much oftener if I am at Lelant. Still I shall grieve to leave this home, tho' a religious house and stronghold of the Pope (and Satan). I'll miss it mainly for the splendid view from my window and the Balcony of the

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

country and the green fields just under the walls, where I feed rooks, daws and starlings from the window. Also I shall deeply regret the loss of one of the nuns who is my dear and intimate friend: who has been from 17 years of age in this order — daughters or sisters of the Cross — and is now about to take the last and perpetual vow or vows. I've done my best to try and shake her resolution, but she seems bent on carrying the thing through. Still, she may perhaps recoil at the last moment. I've managed to keep on doing a little work and have had several articles in the magazines and one or two weeklies since I've been here: but I don't get well: and by well I don't of course mean what you would in using the word about your own condition. Well, to me now, just means being able to get out for an hour or so, and to sleep at night and digest my food. As to your great work, if M. says it's d — d clever and C. says it's beyond him, and if that's all they say *I* may say you are not getting much help from your experts! If it's beyond C. what will the general reader make of it I wonder! Anyhow I hope you'll have some luck and find some other readers able to appreciate it. With love,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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ELM HOUSE, LELANT, CORNWALL,

*March 8th, 1916.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your letter came some days ago — your letter, I say advisedly — in the good old way in which you were wont

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

to write when we corresponded on Human Instincts and such subjects. Well, I'm glad your experts *are* giving you some help after all. In spite of the cold I managed to get away from the hospital this week and came here. They were anxious to keep me and when I said I was coming to 'economize' the Head Sister said they would gladly reduce their terms to meet my views, so I had to say I wanted a change! But I was sorry to leave them too, especially Sister Mary Cornelia, my particular friend. But we were all a happy family — I the only heretic among them — nuns, priests, and patients in the private ward. We were all very human in spite of theological differences. It is however all right here where I know the people of the house and most of the village society and where they all come to see me. I saw Nora — she was just coming up to the door to look me up when I arrived. I gave her your message and she hopes you will come in April and wants to know if Naomi will be coming. . . .

About Henry James — I had even less molecular affinity with him than you, and we had little to say to each other on the rare occasions on which we met. Nevertheless, I feel that in his way, in his mental world, he was great and have read many of his works with the sincerest admiration. Also I admired his action at the last in expressing his intense Englishness and disgust at the cold calculating policy about the war of his own country — much as he loved it. Besides he was really great in private, only his wonderful kindness and helpfulness to others doesn't appear to be well known. Not one of the articles I have read on him does him justice I think; and I've had letters from his personal friends who are really angry at these notices. —

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

'To hell with these wretched scribblers — what do they know?' is the burden of their epistles. I have just read a letter from Mrs. William James, who was with him when he died, to a friend: she must be a sweet lovable woman — like the lamented William J. I saw some time ago that the Penelope play was likely to come on soon: how I wish I could be there the first night! May it be a success! About your Greek scapegoat I didn't know — all you say is new to me. *The Evening Standard* I don't see now, so if the article about actors came out I've missed it. But I've made this too long already. With love to you both.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON

My wife complains that they are 'deep in snow' at Worthing, and the Ranee writes that she is 'deep in snow' at Ascot.

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ELM HOUSE, LELANT,

March 20th.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm sending you *Cornhill* — not exactly a new one, but a parcel containing half a dozen copies from Smith Elder was not forwarded to me until yesterday. I wonder if you take *The Times*, and if so if you read an article of mine (signed with initials) on a friendly rat at Lelant, on the 15th? It was odd to have a long article in *The Times* about a rat in these days, but I thought it too good for any

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

other periodical and it turned out they took it at once. It was copied in the Devonshire and Cornish newspapers, so everyone in these parts read it and are rather proud that Lelant can boast of a very important Rat!

I'm about as usual: not getting any stronger, and just able to walk a little on the level road. I see the Hartleys and a good many of the Lelant people I know here, and am able to do a little writing. I've just been corresponding with a grandson of the tyrant Rosas who read an article of mine about my childish recollections of Buenos Ayres in *The English Review* and was interested in it. He is the son of Rosas' daughter, the famous 'Manuelita' who fled to England with her father and lived the rest of her life here and died, oddly enough, in Belsize Park Gardens about 1890 or 1900.

Is Naomi coming if you come in April? With love to you both.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

This letter renews my regret that all those which passed between us during the first seventeen years have been lost or destroyed. Only lately when going through some old notes I came across a list, and I own it is a somewhat disagreeable list, of the remnants of many animal instincts in man. The more we investigated the subject the more objectionable it became and for that reason we dropped working on it, though it would have reinforced very strongly the accepted view of human origins.

Hudson's admiration of Henry and William James was

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

very deep and sincere. Nevertheless it is easy to understand that he and Henry James had little to say to each other. Henry James's world was but a fragile tissue woven by a highly concentrated subjective mind, which in other circumstances might have rivalled his brother's work, turned exclusively on art, while art for Hudson was but the activity of one human instinct out of the many which he felt within him. Perhaps this was also one of the reasons that my own slight intercourse with Henry James at Rye was not particularly fruitful to me. His chief subject of talk when we met was George Gissing, about whom he cross-questioned me with the keenness and pertinacity characteristic of a barrister.

The Greek Scape-Goat referred to in this letter is the *Pharmakos* of the Thargelian Festival at Athens about which I wrote a paper in *Folk-Lore*.

75

LELANT, CORNWALL,  
May 2nd, 1916.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I wonder if you know that your writing is getting quite illegible — it is I daresay a reflex effect of the typewriter. I can only make out on your p.c. that you can't come to Cornwall and that you have a play coming out and then follows something about Irene Vanbrugh, sciatica and a wild cat. I should hardly have thought so vigorous a creature as a wild cat subject to such a complaint. I have a type-writer in London who can type-write a hundred

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

thousand words without a letter misplaced or a comma wrong, and whose writing resembles the track of a small beetle over the paper, during which it, the beetle, has made a series of discharges of an inky fluid on the paper and then kicked the ink with its hind legs as it crawled along. It's very funny. I hope to be able to get to London in June — early if possible — and then I may be able to witness your play if it is going to be put on next month. But I'm not strong: I can't recover my walking powers owing to the heart weakness. The weather begins to improve here and the elm trees are beginning to show a faint tinge of green on their upper twigs. The hawthorn is just coming into bloom.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE,

*June 2nd, 1916.*

Just a line to tell you I've seen Sir James Mackenzie to-day and had a good long talk with him. He says my heart will just go on this erratic way and I must take a lot of digitalis when it is bad and can go on all right so long as I don't get any more attacks of pneumonia, bronchitis and pleurisy. He asks me to go and look in to see him as often as I like, and wants some of my books.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

A fine man!

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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TOWER HOUSE, W.,

June 17th, 1916.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am still suffering from a weak heart! just now I'm taking digitalis, which I hate and fear, but it doesn't seem to stop the irregular beating. Otherwise I'm fairly well and able to work. I go for week-ends to Worthing where my wife is still staying. She is rather better down there than in London, as she can stay as long as she likes out of doors — on Monday she was out for about 6 hours. I came back yesterday and will go down on Saturday. I wish I could go to Simonsbath. All my projected visits to the country — the New Forest, Cornwall and Dartmoor have had to be dropped. Many invitations I've had lately and been unable to accept. A fellow I used to know in Newbury has just written to me to say that he has been reading my *Afoot in England* and found in it a description of the old parsonage at Coombe village on Beacon Hill where I visited the parson. Well, his daughter has just bought the old house he tells me, and invites me to go and spend a few days with her there. Such tempting offers as that have to be refused. Coombe is the most out of the world and charming little village in England. Did you catch many wee troutlets in the Barle I wonder. I'm just reading Curle's book on Conrad — not too good : also Robert Frost's *North of Boston*, a good thing from America. The two most striking novels I've seen recently are Grant Watson's savage tale, and the *Children of*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

*the Dead End* written by a navvy. Does Naomi want Zoo tickets?

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*September 13th, 1916.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Have just found your letter here on my return from a short week-end at Ascot. Sorry to hear you've been down with such a painful malady as Colitis, and hope you're mending now. I've been in London this long time — 7 or 8 weeks or more and pretty ill all the time: but I haven't much hope of ever getting back to decent health now: the last doctor I saw told me 'I mustn't expect my health ever to get right again.' But alone here I could get on better with my work, and have been able to do a lot in getting new editions of old books ready for the press, and in fresh work and a lot of small articles. But editors are slow to put anything in nowadays. I've got a lot of articles out and some half a dozen or more accepted to be used some day. One of my friends says he has written *five* books since the war began — one to order — all the others not accepted, and at last in despair he has enlisted. I made up my mind to fly to the roof on the first indication of a Zeppelin coming over London, but alas when they came the other evening I wasn't well and had gone to bed early and when the uproar began when they passed over Westbourne Park I wouldn't get up. Then the roar of the

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

guns started and I did get up and went out and saw some of the excitement in the street. Everybody had seen one Zeppelin when it went over here and I had missed it. My wife is at Worthing still, much as usual in health. Poor Mrs. Walker is bad with cancer and I don't think she'll live long. I want to go to St. Ives in October if I can manage it. With love to you both.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

79

TOWER HOUSE, W.,

September 22nd, 1916.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have just returned from Worthing and find your two p.cs. here — dated some days ago. The *Pharmakos* papers have not been received so I don't know what the word means. I'm no better in health and shall have to leave London pretty soon I think: I intend trying Falmouth. I hear from America that two publishers are quarrelling over my books. Dutton who never did and never would do anything with them and said they were too English, not 'sweet' enough for American readers, now pretends that he has always been enthusiastic about them and is bringing out new editions of *A Crystal Age* and *The Purple Land*, with forewords by Roosevelt. . . .

It would amuse me very much if the sudden popularity had not come so late in the day. Both of these publishers are trying to get the book I'm writing, and Dent is trying

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to persuade me to let him have the American rights as well as the English. My servant house-keeper has gone to Scotland so I have to go out for everything to eat or drink. I hope you are both well.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*October 14th, 1916.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Sorry you haven't been well. I'm here still and don't want to leave London just yet. I must try and see Sir J. Mackenzie and have several other things to see to before leaving: but as long as this mild weather lasts I'm as well here as I can be in Cornwall. At present I'm writing little nature sketches for a slowly growing small volume. I wish you could come over and have lunch with me at Whiteley's one day next week and that Naomi would come — I haven't seen her for years.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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(A CORNISH VILLAGE),

*December 31st, 1916.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm still vegetating here, doing little or nothing. We have in the house a Rev. H. Ford, D.D., a vicar from the

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Peak district, who comes in and smokes with me, shows me the books he has written and talks library matters. Somehow wherever I go I get mixed up with priests and parsons! The past ten days it has been a furious wind and wet so I could just manage to go to the post-office down the street, and on the last occasion my hat blew off twice. The first time I caught it: the second time it whirled 50 yards away and it happened that our own vicar, The Rev. Something Savage and his wife were coming down the road and he with marvellous agility for so majestic and old a man captured it for me! So now I've got two parsons on hand! Flushing isn't as you said built on the side of a cliff, but at the foot, so there isn't much of a slope getting to this house. Next door lives an old gentleman (a bachelor) whose acquaintance I've made and who is very amusing. He is nearly blind but won't *see* it and walks boldly about everywhere and has twice stepped off our stone pier into the sea! The other day the milkman who has a donkey in his cart was here delivering milk when the old man came out and was walking briskly into the donkey when a young man passing by seized him by the arm and pulled him back on the pavement. The old gentleman turned in wrath and swore at him. 'Do you think I want your impudent help?' he shouted. 'I can see where I'm going as well as anyone.' Then after a few more angry words, he stepped out and came bang against the donkey.

Last evening I sat in the kitchen with my host and hostess and laboriously tried to explain what was meant by a joke, a pun, and so on, and I gave them two or three examples and after pondering the matter some time they both confessed that they couldn't see any point in them.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I had a card from old Napier King, R.A., asking me to call and see him at Falmouth where he lives. I have known his big sea pictures many many years, but don't delight much in his art. An ugly uninteresting town is Falmouth. Dull old Penzance is quite a fairy city, an Arabian garden of delight, in comparison. But in the evening, looking out from my window, when I see it all in darkness, and behind town and hill, over the water the sky is luminous pink and amber with our new moon 'stooping' through the flying grey clouds, it is a very beautiful prospect. I hope you are all right again. With good wishes to both for the New Year.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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*January 24th.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your desire to have a talk is all right but why slur your words and make it so hard to understand what you say? The smallness doesn't matter: I can read the minutest writing as easily as others can read a Family Bible. But it must be clear. I have to guess your meaning in most cases: and I can't make out the name of your Persian cat. Is it Mazeppa, or Muezzin, or Zoroaster, or Hafiz, or what? London with its weather and explosions must be like hell. But it's bad enough here: on Sunday I stayed in bed, and since Saturday I haven't ventured to put my nose out of the door. Even by the fire one feels cold and all I

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

can do is to sit as close to it as I can and read and write, and so have managed to get through some arrears and work off a lot of things I had on hand. But this is the first village I've ever stayed at where I've found it impossible to add anything fresh to my notes. I feel like going out and seizing hold of anyone I meet and saying to him — 'Did you ever see a mouse, or even a black-beetle? Well, for God's sake tell me something about it.' They can tell you nothing. The only thing they take an interest in is their own squalid affairs — and the scandal talk which flourishes like a green bay-tree. What they say of the Vicar and what he says of them would make an amusing yarn for a Mrs. Gaskell or someone of that taste, but Mrs. Gaskell is milk and water and skim-milk at that compared to the gossip of *this* village. The vicar in giving me *his* version of his relations with his parishioners says — As to morality there's no such thing — no faintest idea of such a state of mind has ever dawned on them. They are simply unmoral and are as ready to steal and lie and backbite as they are to eat their dinner. And he has been their sky-pilot for many years! One row he got into, first with his churchwarden, then with the village generally, then with the Rural Dean and the Lord of the Manor, was much like the *Iliad of Poker Flat* in Bret Harte, and was all about a small heap of stones at the back of the Church which ought to have been removed and were left there for some months. The Rural Dean happened to be the Vicar of the next parish, and he came about the stones and sharply ordered our vicar to remove them at once and said it was a disgrace to the church to have left them so long. Now, this year, our vicar has succeeded in getting himself appointed

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Rural Dean, and he is rubbing his hands with delight at the prospect of getting his knife into his neighbour. Now, he says, he will visit . . . when he's not expected and will be sure to find some old stones or rubbish in old Stick-in-the-Mud's churchyard, and then he'll give it to him hot! Old Stick-in-the-Mud is what he calls his nearest parsonic neighbour! These are the matters which interest the . . . people. But really this parson is the only interesting man I've met in the place. He says all the trouble he has with the people is entirely due (not to their unmorality, he could condone that as they know no better) to their lack of a sense of humour. He was delighted to find that I agreed with him on that point. Also he is something of a poet and is one of a very old and once important . . . family . . . pure Norman . . . who had lands given them by William, and who fought for generations with the wild Irish, and slaughtered them as the wretches deserved to be slaughtered, and took their lands and so on, and built castles all over Down and Antrim. Of course this man should have gone into the army and that, he says, was his desire as a boy, but he was flung into the church and so he gets what satisfaction he can for his fighting instincts in . . . as parson. I wonder what he would say if he ventures to question me on my religious beliefs some day and I should reply that I'm a 'religious atheist.' The other day I was having tea with him and we got talking about Mysticism, and I said that the mystics were all under a delusion. He looked at me and his wife seemed upset and so we dropped the dangerous subject.

I'm glad you've got hold of Julian Huxley as I think he's a man with a biggish mind, and he'll perhaps say

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

something helpful about your work. Your priests amuse me. Yesterday I had a nice affectionate letter from the nun of the Convent I told you about, who nursed me and owing to what I said to her changed her mind about taking her perpetual vows last June, and left the Convent and is now in France (Tours) with something to do and very happy, she tells me — and grateful to me! So that even an atheist (if religious) can do a good turn to a devout Christian at times. She *is* devout, and always will be, but her leaving the convent she tells me, was very shocking to her fellow nuns, for she completed her ten years as probationer and was ready and anxious to take the last vows in spite of her parents' opposition, and in a few weeks the fatal moment would have come and she would have been buried for the rest of her life. Now the poor dear thing is free and as she is young still (28) and nice-looking and sweet-tempered she will probably marry and be happy.

But I can't go on for ever and you will no more be able to read my writing than I am able to read yours.

With love to you both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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*February 26th, 1917.*

DEAR MORLEY ROBERTS,

Are you there? And how are you? And are you working? I've done very little this long time — only a few articles, and if you see the Reviews for March try and read

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

a thing of mine called 'My Friend the Pig' in *The National Review*. But just now I'm trying to do a few chapters and finish the story of my childhood and boyhood, and in one short chapter I've just sent to be typed I deal with the animistic emotion in early boyhood, as I experienced it. And as that's a subject you are familiar with I'd like you to glance at it and pull me up if I say something wrong. I remember that Prof. William James said of me that my merit was in saying exactly what was in me without any colouring from books or others and so on: — *but* that merit has its disadvantages. A spider can spin its geometric essay or frame out of its own belly and always do it right, but a man who attempts that sort of thing may go wrong and make an egregious ass of himself without knowing it — until some reviewer kindly tells him. On which account I'd like you to look at this small chapter — if you will and can? Though the atmosphere is (word illegible) the weather has changed with us to wind from the south-west and rain every day — blessed rain that's making the frost-caked earth green again and allowing the remnants of the birds to enter on a new lease of life. The town, as I see it from the window where I'm working, is half-veiling her ugly mug in mist and rain. And I've sat indoors till now — lunch time — and if I go out and meet the vicar he'll probably say, 'Why the devil didn't you go to church to-day?' Everybody hates him here, and I tell my landlady that's why I like him. It proves to me that's the one and only really good man in the village. And so we are great friends. He has all the *Golden Bough* books, and lots of other books one doesn't expect to find in a vicar's library. But he's the one and only man in the place who takes any interest in

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

things of the mind. And he has humour — no wonder they dislike him! With love to Naomi.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

*Let me know.*

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CORNWALL,

*March 22nd, 1917.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm just sending you that brief and slight chapter on Animism in a boy you promised to look at. My typist has allowed a lot of my work to rest in her hands and has only sent me this now. I'm going from here about the end of the month and will take a couple of days at Exeter. I'm sending a lot of small tins of Cornish cream to friends and have addressed one to Naomi: if she doesn't like cream that cat will be glad to have it. I know it's against your digestible principles to eat it. I hope when I'm in London you will lunch with me one day and that Naomi will come.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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LONDON,

*March, 1917.*

MY DEAR HUDSON,

How your screed will pan out as the chapter of a book I

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can't quite say, as I don't know the relative weight of the other chapters, but I think, taking the thing by itself, it is slight. I really don't know that I can help you much or even criticize with any assurance, but I'll do my best. On the first page you speak of that 'which to the enlightened man is not there.' By this term you mean is not 'obviously there,' as I should say. It is there all the same, and you might note how all the ancient influences of animism cling to language still and set up rows of logical and illogical stumbling-blocks. It is the chief and primal source of the vitalistic in general speculation.

I think you should be a little careful as to how you define animism. We all get mixed about it owing to the old 'spirits' in us of the animistic and pre-animistic stages. I prefer to confine animism to the savage theory that things don't work of themselves but must have a spirit to work them. The pre-animistic stage is a much more natural and unsophisticated one, the childlike and correct view that things are alive and that life however it may be explained isn't to be explained by inventing spirits. I'm sending you an article of my own in which there are passages which might interest you on these points.

To what extent are the fears of children in the dark due to ancient animism? Even the night terrors of children have something to do with it. Such childish terrors are usually attributed to tales told by nurses, but after all such tales only reanimate partially perished instincts, and what a long time it is till any instinct does perish! Aren't there two types of mind? The type which trusts good spirits and the type which fears bad ones? I think the wise fear the bad ones most. Did you ever pass a night alone in a big

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

forest miles from humanity? If you did and were not tired it is highly probable you found it palpitating with real and unreal things, and even adult wisdom or knowledge could not quite soothe your unquiet fears. You say that it withers and dies in towns. Now does it? Does any ancient experience build up an instinct and then let it go? I think our animistic feelings are as likely to come out in a lonely house in a city as in a wilderness. Who likes to sleep alone in an empty house? What are ghosts but old instinctive fears which get clad sometimes with hallucination? Because most people are foolish enough to regard such instincts merely as weakness without a history in the race it by no means follows that they won't succumb to them some time. We all of us feel this though many don't acknowledge it. All things seem alive to us at some time or another. I own this is very strong in me: not only do things seem to have a personality invested with faculties but we pass on to them some of our own.

Wordsworth's *Ode* was an artistic lie. I much prefer Vaughan's simpler treatment in the *Retreat*, though that of course is a forerunner of Wordsworth's. In fact Wordsworth took it from Vaughan. The finer feelings are the products of transmuted instinctive feelings. I believe your most orthodox reader will know deep in himself that his very orthodoxy is nothing but a refuge house from ancient hauntings. I don't think anybody is unconscious of an element of conscious life in nature and himself alike. After all the notion is very largely a scientific fact. We recognize this in things which we know to be actually living and when we get into physics we discover that after all we are one with the inorganic.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I don't know but what it is a pity that you don't read more about these subjects. Of course I know quite well that one of your chief charms is the fact that you are still so largely unsophisticated, that you are not debauched by much learning, that you are rather a child of wisdom than a child of instruction, but still in men like Tylor and Frazer there is an infinite amount that would prove suggestive to you. By the way, don't put down your artistic joy in colour in another list of survivals. It must have been got from your immediate ancestors of the last few thousand years or so. For the primitive mind is a poor colourist or recognizer of colour. There are many savages who still recognize three only. Early man, by which I mean man of a million years ago, didn't live in the world of Turner or Rubens. In the same way I don't think your feelings in regard to flowers are in any way survivals of animistic instinct. They are nothing but a sensuous increase of appreciation of form and colour, unless you associate your joy in flowers with something that makes it more beautiful. Of course the instance you give of first seeing and first discovering a flower has quality of its own. I think you should develop what you mean by these flower feelings. If you think them alive, or thought them alive, that wasn't necessarily true animism. If you consider a tree alive as you are, that is if you think they owe everything to themselves as the natural man does who hasn't yet invented a soul, the whole thing is pre-animistic, to which state of mind we are now returning.

Yours ever,

M. R.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

This letter which is incomplete owing to the old short-hand script being only partly legible, was written when Hudson sent me the first draft of the seventeenth chapter of *Far Away and Long Ago*. It will be obvious from other parts of his work and from this that he was somewhat apt to mix up his usual view of animism, by which he meant a 'projection' of himself into nature, or a rapt subjective state, and true animism. I lay no stress on the suggestions in this letter. They are but suggestions and I could criticize them as severely as most critics, but suggestions were what Hudson preferred. They were far more use to him than any laboriously constructed essay, which would have been vitiated for him by some other theory than his own. What he wanted was something that made him think and brought back memories and enabled him to get them absolutely clear. What in the following letter he calls 'an exhaustive critique' was therefore not meant to be exhaustive and if it had any value it lay in the fact that, right or wrong, I had read more early anthropology, etc., than he had ever troubled to look into. As many others had noted it was in this very ignorance that his strength lay. He worked by himself and then looked at his subjects through other eyes. The reverse order was too scientific for him and led, as he believed, to academic conclusions. This is often true enough, and Hudson was never academic. He preferred the woods and groves to any Porch.

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FLUSHING, FALMOUTH,

*March 29th, 1917.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for exhaustive criticism. You are right in assuming that I want to make the book an unsophisticated one. This chapter, slight as it is, seemed to come almost too near to deep things to be quite in harmony with the simple narrative of a child and boy's life and emotions. It came in as a sort of postscript or supplement to the preceding chapter about my early adventures with snakes and the feeling they produced in me. Of course I must alter it somewhat. The trouble is I don't know whether to go into that subject of a child's fear of darkness and the instinctive idea of a monster 'that doth close behind him tread,' in any dark solitary place. I had that feeling so strongly in childhood that if I were a good artist with a pencil I could make a startling portrait of the one who used always to follow me — at nights among trees, I mean. Out on the plains the sense of his presence was quite faint and hardly frightened me. Now when I wrote the piece I sent you I was going on with this subject, but I am always in doubt as to whether it is part of the animistic feeling or something else. That's why I didn't go on with it just then. Two or three years ago I was spending a night in a hotel at Exeter and got talking with a fellow there who looked like an undertaker or dissenting minister and was amazed to hear that he *was* a Nonconformist preacher and preached anywhere and everywhere about the land wherever he was called to lecture, and this was

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

his real occupation, a University Extension Lecturer, whose subject was English literature! A strange combination! We talked till midnight about the 19th century poets and in speaking of Coleridge got into that subject of the imaginary monster.

As one who on a lonely road  
Doth walk with fear and dread,  
Who having once looked back walks on  
And turns no more his head  
Because he knows a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

Comparing notes we discovered that he in England and I in S. America had gone through the same kind of experience and he said the awful terror he endured on having to walk a mile by a narrow path through a dark wood at night had remained in his mind as the most dreadful time of his life. This gave him an interest in the subject, and he found in the course of his readings that Coleridge was one of several men who became distinguished writers in after life who had been at the Blue Coat school and had suffered the punishment in use then of being confined in a silent and perfectly dark room for hours at a stretch. Charles Lamb was one of the others — I forget the names of the rest. The question that puzzles me is — What the devil does it mean? How can it be connected with the animistic or rather pre-animistic faculty and emotion? Yet it is universal, I should think, and it is found in most savages as well as civilized men. I give it up. I wonder if this imaginary monster was the bridge by which the mind came out of the self-projection of itself with all nature, the notion that things had intelligence in them, to the

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

notion of a spirit inhabiting them? The Curipita monster of the S. American Indians who follows and kills and devours them in the forests is supposed to be a sort of guardian of the trees and spends his time roaming about examining the roots of the trees to see if they are sound. He is human-like in form but hideous to look at and his feet point backwards: he has enormous grass-green teeth and he warbles sweetly and sometimes sings or cries like a lost child to entice men to enter the wood. Then he springs like a jaguar on them from his hiding-place and with his awful teeth tears their side open to devour the liver which is his favourite morsel. But I don't know. Animism is nothing but the theory of the savage to account for the intelligence in Nature, and what is called by Tylor pre-animism is simply the same thing as animism. The fact is there and you build up all sorts of speculations and fancies about it, and then outgrow them and discard them, and still the animistic idea — the soul of intelligence in a thing — continues. An Italian anthropologist contends that the faculty is common to man and the higher animals. Not being an animal myself I can't say. Your lecture is deeply interesting and I'll keep it to read it again before returning it. The most singular instance of the power of water (if we exclude the Lourdes miracles) was related to me by Wilfrid Blunt. He utterly rejects all supernatural religions and doesn't believe in immortality. Now he suffered terribly from rheumatic gout at one time, and was almost a hopeless cripple with it. He consulted all the best doctors and followed orders with no benefit at all. At length in a fit of desperation he went to the sacred well of St. Winifred in Wales and bathed there in cold water —

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

and was cured! I could not say he was telling a lie as Lady Gregory and George Wyndham were there and corroborated his story. I said it must have been his faith — that though he calls himself an atheist he in his heart believes, else he would not have tried the experiment. But he sticks to it that there was no particle of faith in it; he merely did it, because he had tried everything else, just in a spirit of mad adventure. Still I don't quite believe that he is as free from superstition of some kind as he tries to make out. And if Naomi would make a clean breast of it you would probably discover that she cherishes certain secret beliefs and notions, which may be remains of religion or due to the instinctive belief in something behind nature which acts on and influences us.

I don't think Frazer can teach me anything about tree-worship in England tho' he might tell me a lot about ideas and customs and so on that have come down to our day from that source. The little I could find about such a thing was embodied in a short story called 'An Old Thorn' which appeared in the *English Review* some years ago.

I hope you got the Cornish cream all right. I'm staying here another week as the weather still seems rather beastly.

With love to you and Naomi,

W. H. HUDSON.

I hear Galsworthy is back from his hospital work in France. Friends tell me that they don't much like Conrad's new book.<sup>1</sup> I'm waiting to get it to read it for myself.

In answer to this letter I wrote to Hudson on fear in darkness and woods and the comparative release of the mind on plains or an open pampa. My own experience,

<sup>1</sup> *The Shadow Line*, by Joseph Conrad.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

much larger than his own as regards mountains and forests in which I was alone, led me to the belief that there is a deep-seated hereditary fear of wild animals, and that wildest animal man, which shows itself most where it was always most needed, that is, where there is natural cover for feral and human enemies. Therefore a solitary camp in a dark forest always made me more alert and I slept less deeply, while in a plain, even at night, apprehension of any kind was apt to vanish, though even then one is inclined to let a camp-fire die down before going to sleep or to go apart from its embers, as wise travellers, who are solitary, still do in countries where a night attack may take place. But this subject is inexhaustible. Hudson's description of the Curipita reminded me of the Australian bush bogey, the Bunyip, a monster as large as a horse which lives in water-holes and utters terrible booming cries when not engaged, as I gathered, in eating such human beings as it could catch. This creature is believed in not only by the black-fellows, but by many white men. Like many such terrors it may have descended from predatory prehistoric animals, just as ogres represent cannibalistic eras of the past.

The lecture referred to was a paper on "The Origin of Therapeutic Bathing."

DEAR ROBERTS,

My time here will be up on Friday next — Good Friday

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

— and I can't stay longer as my rooms have been taken by others. I'm going to stay the week-end at Exeter in the hope of some amelioration in the vile weather before going on to London. Here it has been incessant snow and sleet and hail storms the last three days and we have had the country all white once more.

Your paper<sup>1</sup> is extremely interesting and the only criticism I can make is that a good many good scientific persons are intolerant of a humorous treatment of the subject. Old Sclater used to say, 'Let a man be as humorous and witty as he likes, but he must keep all that out of a scientific paper.' Frank Beddard was even more so and a paper by Grant Allen (who couldn't help being humorous) would make him quite wild. Look what he writes here! he would exclaim. 'This little beast, I regret to say, is named *Manalaides agathaelaides*.' He regrets to say indeed! Doesn't he know that his funniness only spoils the interest of the subject, and so on and so forth. Well, that temper is so common that some of your hearers would think you put too much humour in the second half of your paper. I suppose William James had the deftest way of putting humorous touches in his work — he did it in such a way that it was like part of his argument or as if it made the argument stronger. That quiet graceful humour of his makes his most philosophical work better reading than most fiction. I shall perhaps see Sir James Mackenzie when I'm at home, as my heart worries me a good deal, altho' otherwise I'm very much better than when I came. Still it's rather disappointing to go back without some improvement in the weakest part.

<sup>1</sup> The paper referred to in the previous letter.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I'll let you know when I'm in London and we may be able to arrange a meeting. By the bye an example of the humour which the serious scientist might not like is your remark about not knowing what Jove's reflections were as to Juno's bathing once a year for a certain purpose.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

Thursday, April, 1917.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Some months ago a lady friend of some friends of mine in S. London had a tooth extracted by a dentist in that part and he injected cocaine in her gum and immediately that side of her face became paralysed and she lost her speech, or can only mumble. The doctor thought she would get over it in a while but she remains in the same condition and they ask me to advise them about a nerve specialist — also if Dr. Rissien Russell is a good man to consult in such a case. Of course I don't know but I know that you will know and want you to tell me. Please write as soon as convenient as they are anxiously waiting for a reply.

Alas! My poor young friend, Edward Thomas — writer of many books and reviews of poetry in *The Nation* and some newspapers, has just been killed. He left a small volume in MS. of poems, to be brought out by his friend Roger Ingpen, and he, Ingpen, writes to me that in his

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

last letter from the front he tells him to send me a copy of the book when it comes out. Poor Thomas hated war and when he found they would not send him out because he was too useful in teaching map-reading to young officers (when he was in the infantry) he petitioned to be allowed to go with the artillery, and after six months training on Salisbury Plain went out about five months ago and met his end in the great Arras battle. He leaves a young wife and two children and they were wholly dependent on his literary earnings for a livelihood. Also Longman's youngest son has been killed — the one who was worth something, who had a touch of Zoological science and would not go into the publishing business. He was a fine young fellow.

I am glad you are better and hope to see you and Naomi one day when I come back from Worthing. I'm going for the week-end only.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE,

*August 16th, 1917.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Pardon my forgetfulness in not writing yesterday morning to explain. I was unwell all day Tuesday. And very irritable in the morning on that day. That house-keeper of mine came up to make some mournful complaint about the milk and I in a sudden rage told her to

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

take herself and the milk to the devil and leave me in peace. And off she went and being of a somewhat sulky disposition kept out of the way all day, so in the afternoon I had no one to send with a wire to the post-office to say not to expect me. I'm sorry as I wanted to pay you a visit very much. I was to have gone to Ascot for a few days this morning, but have written that I'm not well enough. However I shall probably go to the Zoo on Saturday and shall be glad to join Naomi in a cup of tea if she should be there. I'm sorry I couldn't go to see our Yanks come through London yesterday. I wanted to see them very much. I went in the late afternoon to the Fountains instead and fed a wood-pigeon that knows me and always flies into my hand to be fed to the great admiration of lookers-on. Also two broods of young moor-hens all furiously hungry. The keeper came up and told me that the Govt. order was a fine of £100 or 6 months' imprisonment for anyone caught in the act of feeding the water-fowl in the park. I expressed my astonishment and laughed and went on feeding the birds. He walked angrily off to the other keeper, an old soldier, who knows me and winks at my law-breaking, and the old soldier, I suppose, told him not to trouble about me. It is however a serious thing for the birds that can't live if not fed in the parks and one can see how frightfully hungry they are. Most of the ducks have been killed off before now on the Serpentine and I suppose in all the parks in London. The idiotic order has served to frighten people now from taking a few stale crumbs for the birds.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

December 5th, 1917.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Just got your p.c. I'm here just now — I've been staying a few days at Worthing. I hope to get off on Monday next. Shall spend a few days at Exeter, then try Kingsbridge and Salcombe and then perhaps Fowey and that coast. I mean if Kingsbridge isn't nice. Glad you are fitter. I've managed to keep on at work all the time and have a good lot done. Yesterday I saw Sir J. Mackenzie and he says I'm going on all right, and must just keep to the digitalis when I want it. He said I was looking very well. I don't believe there will be more raids: they have discovered by now I fancy that they do practically no harm (at a great cost) and only keep alive the intense irritation and hatred of them as baby-killers: and as they want peace it is a bad policy. So now you can go to bed in peace. I don't think you are right about *one* of H. J.'s books — *The Sense of the Pack*: it is really a charming idea and well done as far as it goes. But you did not give it a proper reading. You can't know anything about a book by James by dipping into it. I was with Dent to-day — he still wants to get my Memories book, and even argued that he had accepted my offer and I had agreed to let him have it. However I kept his letters and I maintain we never came to terms and that he can't have it unless — he'll give more!

Love and best wishes for the season to both. I'll write when I get down there.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*December 9th, 1917.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your letter received last evening. I hope to go on Tuesday and intend spending two or three days in Exeter my natal city. And what makes you think I want to meet D? If a man knows himself to be a born fool, or an ass, as we are all in comparison to what we should be, then I'm pleased to meet him and be his friend. But if he is so lacking in sense of humour as to take himself seriously then I don't want to meet him. . . . By the bye, his particular brand of humour — a highly cultivated literary kind — never appeals to me. He has made it all out of his own head and reads it into his characters. It is like an attempt at making Cornish humour like English or Irish or Scotch and doesn't quite succeed. I may go to . . . however: and two or three people I know who are too lazy to look out a place for themselves have said that as soon as they hear of my finding a nice winter place they will go and join me. I suppose the only thing for me to do is to write that I'm settled and comfortable — then go off somewhere else. I suppose I can change my mind if I like. I hear that Conrad and Galsworthy are both in London. Conrad's wife has to have an operation on her knee — she has had several before now. I haven't seen either of them.

With love and all good wishes to you both,  
Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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CRAIGSIDE, LOOE, CORNWALL,

*December 19th, 1917.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your two letters and enclosures just received, and though I wrote a day or two ago I'll write again straight off. For the sonnet many thanks: it is very good to my mind and I suppose the alterations you want to make are in the last 6 lines. I don't quite know why the art which reckons life by means and not its end is called mysterious. Unless the aspiration, the reaching out — the desire of the moth for the star — is mysterious, and I suppose it is. Someone has said that the observer and student of nature, the scientist, is a coral insect adding an infinitesimal part to a structure he doesn't comprehend and knows nothing about. That is so no doubt. But the artist who has imagination should be conscious of something more — should be devoted to 'something afar,' away from the sphere of his little peddling art. But he never never never appears able to get away from it or to think there is anything higher in the universe. In the 4th line of the sextet I prefer *led*, the word you first wrote, instead of *loved*. Nature doesn't love us and we don't love Nature except in an indirect way. She stands proxy to the thing we really love — our fellow creatures. She only comes in for the over-flow. The caveman etching a wild horse on a bone, the poet in a fine frenzy composing an ode in 40 stanzas to a sea-mew and the lady clasping her Pekinese are all loving nature in that way: but the man who spends his days in woods and wilds in studying the life and conver-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

sation of animals has a second and stronger incentive – Mental Curiosity. Nature has two lures for him instead of one.

I am returning you the paper on immunity as you will like to keep as many copies as you can get. It is tremendously interesting even to one who can't follow the argument, to whom the whole subject is strange and new. It gives me a startling idea of a subtle intelligence working at a problem – creating, building up with a stubborn material and getting the result aimed at by means of all sorts of tricks and dodges. I put it that way because I have just been saying something like that in a paper I'm writing about bats for my *Diversions of a Naturalist*.<sup>1</sup> Nature does this impossible thing: she takes a beast and makes it a creature of the air not by following the old plan when she built up the bird out of the reptile but by reversing the whole process. I imagine a high intelligence from the stars looking on at Nature at this queer task and mocking her for trying to do an impossible thing. Well, I've written enough for one – the paper one buys gets thinner and thinner each time. I'm sure not to stay here over a fortnight. It's not warm and comfortable enough. I shall go to Fowey first and try that next. But I hope to get some work done here. I'm sorry to hear you have more financial disasters. The weather has been and still is frightfully cold here.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of a Naturalist*, published 1919.

# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE, CORNWALL,

Saturday, 1917.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I waited till I got a sure address before answering your long and interesting letter. For I did with a good deal of pains actually succeed in reading every word. Still, I should like to suggest that when you have such subjects to discuss it would be better to have your letter typed. Probably Naomi won't thank me for the suggestion. I think you are mistaken about any residuum of a belief in design in explanation of my way of putting it in reference to Nature composing the bat.<sup>1</sup> And I send you the article on as I want you to read it for two reasons — one to show you that it is free from that superstition and the other because my typist feels shocked at the way I put it. She doesn't like the Nature dialogue 'for Nature is fearful and wonderful after all and I don't like her reduced to a sort of clever pantomime creature bandying words with a snigglng imp from another region,' — and so on, very severe! Now it seems to me that when I described the building of the bat I wanted to tell just how it came to be evolved and at the same time, or in telling it, to make a little fun at the idea of design in nature. And that gave offence to the lady because, altho' in some degree emancipated, she is still under the domination of the old creation idea, but when she goes on to say — 'I can't bear the slightest touch of anything within measurable distance of vulgarity in your writing —' I think it time to take a sound opinion.

<sup>1</sup> *The Book of a Naturalist*, 1919.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

For if there really is any touch of vulgarity then it must be altered. She is a dear person and has written books herself, but in this instance I would think more of your opinion than of hers.

I had a fortnight at Looe and liked the place, also some of the people I was getting to know, when I found that it did not suit me owing to the steepness: I felt the strain of toiling up to the house on the hillside too much: and down in the rather squalid and crowded little old town one could not live. So I went to Fowey and had a couple of days at the hotel there and soon found that Fowey was not for me. The big Fowey Hotel and other hotels have been taken by the War Office and are hospitals for wounded officers, and the officers' wives and relations and friends have swarmed down and secured the lodging houses. However I didn't mind that as I didn't like Fowey anyway — perhaps because one hears so much Quiller-Couch. When I was going there my wife wrote to me — 'Mrs. Jones says that Quiller-Couch lives at Fowey.' I replied to her that she had sent me wonderful news, that I had been hearing that Quiller-Couch lived at Fowey all my life and that in Cornwall you heard it every day. It was like a shanty —

Quiller-Couch lives at Fowey  
And I say so,  
And I think so,  
Oh, the poor old man!

or perhaps more like John Brown: —

Quiller-Couch lives at Fowey,  
Quiller-Couch lives at Fowey,  
Quiller-Couch lives at Fowey,  
As we go marching on.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Or it could be put the other way about and made a refrain —

Glory glory halleluja  
Glory glory halleluja  
Glory glory halleluja  
Quiller-Couch lives at Fowey.

At the hotel I looked at the Fowey guidebook and it was full of Q.-C. . . . But I had some funny adventures at Fowey. My landlady and her sister were from Dunster, a spot I know very well and we had long delightful talks about her native place and Wiltshire where they knew Fonthill Abbey and all the villages round as well as I did, and had met some of my old village friends in those parts. There is a grand old cathedral-like church, and at Sunday morning service I was much attracted by a noble effigy on a tomb — a man in alabaster six feet tall, gorgeously robed in the Tudor dress, and so on. It was, I read, the tomb and effigy of a great Cornishman in the early part of the reign of Henry VIII. Very well: at lunch two persons came in and sat opposite to me, a lady with a keen intellectual face and a little bald-headed, commonplace-looking man with bright red cheeks and little black eyes — a Cornish type I hate. The lady conversed and was interesting: her companion was absorbed in his food and never said a word but at last he laughed at something I said about the frost and its effect on bird life last winter. I said I didn't see anything to laugh at and he went back to his food and made no other sign of intelligence. After lunch my landlady was expatiating on the virtues and cleverness of the lady, and when I said: 'But who was the fellow with her?' . . . He was the lineal descendant of the warrior of

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

400 and more years ago and the inheritor of the estate.  
But I can't go on any more with this pen, so goodnight  
and a Happy and prosperous 1918 to you both.

W. H. HUDSON.

I wonder if you are coming.

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LONDON, 1917.

MY DEAR HUDSON,

N. presents her compliments and thanks herewith for the practice in shorthand and typing you have arranged for her. I have read your paper on the bat, finding it of course very interesting as all your stuff of the kind is, or of any kind for that matter. Your critical typist may be all right in her typing profession but I should pay no attention to her literary criticism. It's hard to say what 'vulgarity' is. I suppose she feels something which she regards as want of taste. The utmost she could say against this particular passage is that from many people's point of view it would seem rather flippant and perhaps to be flippant with nature is by inference to be flippant with the deity, a thing too utterly French and Voltairean to be acceptable to the noble and stodgy British heart. Yet I have criticisms to make upon the conversation between nature and the star visitor who has come to see nature's practice shop here, which would require, if you paid any attention to me, the recasting of the passage. I don't like the idea of Nature being made a *thinking* personality. Now my notion is that if the Aldebaran said to her 'How do you make the

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

bat? You must have thought a great deal in order to do it,' she would answer scornfully, 'Think, sir, think? And do you imagine that I, Nature, ever indulge in such a trivial pursuit as thinking? Don't you understand that is a purely human quality which I fluked on in my experiments with life and finding it led to the strangest results threw away myriads of little things without the capacity of thinking and only experimented with those who could? No, sir, I do not think, I work by trial and error. I toss up for it and if it comes out in an amusing way I throw up again. The only human being I remember at the moment who ever came to some faint understanding of my methods was one of my creatures called Diderot who lived in France. He maintained, although he did not understand me or my ways of work, that nothing so human as intelligence need be postulated to account for things as they are. On the contrary he denied that intelligence could possibly have arranged it but he said that if the material of the universe was only in a flux long enough, if there were  $\times$  billion chances to the nth against it the world would most certainly occur. That is really what I do with bats and men and visitors from Aldebaran.' After that I can imagine your Lady Nature restoring the nose she had snapped off and sending him about his business while she resorted again to working things out, not by hypothesis and experiment, but by her elaborate method of pitch and toss, taking the results to gamble with again just to see what would become of them, as if she worked in a kaleidoscope. Well, there you are: this is a rough idea and you may much prefer your own. The only word I want cut out of your own conversation is the word funny, not quite the word

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I think to be used by Lady Nature whatever kind of a gamester she may be.

Now to pursue the matter of the bat, I want to say a little about your view on the bat's sense organs, such as the large ear, the odd tragus, and the nasal protuberances. I very much doubt whether they are sense organs at all, except the large ear which is merely like any other large ear, a method of catching vibrations in a net, so to speak, just as the elephant does, especially the African elephant. Have you considered what I believe to be a main factor ignored and certainly misunderstood by the pure Darwinian, that is the necessary forced growth of plastic organs when there is abundant energy in the organism to which they belong? The more I consider the pure Neo-Darwinian view of survival value the more absurd I find it. It may work all very well up to a point but there are many things which can be explained only on Lamarckian principles. A variation may be used and made useful and then go on growing if energy is directed that way, *i.e.* if the part is used and well fed why then we get cell proliferation. This is comparable to the overgrowth of carapace in some tortoises, etc., and many of the fishes as in ribbon fish. I needn't labour the point but I do think it worth your considering. Such a view at any rate renders many problems easier of solution, problems which have defied any analysis by the method of minute accumulation of favourable variations, all of which I shake my head at nowadays. If I may give you what you will think only an analogy but which is really much more, we may say that an order to build something for a certain use is direction of energy such as may occur in organisms on environmental stimu-

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

lation. Now, provided definite orders are given that the building shall cease, and formation stop at a certain point, the increase of that particular organ will stop there. But if the builders are told that they are to go on building until further orders, if by any chance the architect forgets the whole job, then the building will proceed and form or energy will automatically carry it on into what may be a perpetual growth beyond all necessity. That things like this happen in the evolution of animals I am entirely convinced. This is a thing you might think about and work on if it happens to appeal to you. At any rate you have many more facts at your disposal than I. All this goes in somewhat with the matter of colour and decoration such as we find in the humming-bird. No one can persuade me that the humming-bird's tail or colour are any advantage to it in any sense which makes sense, but we may assume that a superabundantly energetic creature with unlimited food and that of high energy value, must turn that energy if not into an increase of body, into symmetrical adornment whether of plumage or colour. I'll give another analogy and it is that in building a cathedral, if there is unlimited money at the disposal of the builder when the structure has been completed, then the money energy will go into decoration. You will perhaps say these are merely analogies. I think they are much more but I won't labour the point.

I found your letter very amusing, especially your views on the way the talkative Cornish folk talk of Q. I like his *Oxford Book of English Verse* and am grateful for it.

I don't wonder that you didn't care for Fowey but make

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

no mistake, it's a very beautiful place in the summer time, and what in the name of heaven you want at Penzance, which is the only place on the south coast of England I wouldn't be found dead in, I can't tell. I absolutely loathe it, therefore you see that your last sentence in the letter is hardly likely to drag me down there, much as I should like to be with you. . . .

Well, there you are. I hope you'll have a good time and get on well and don't forget that I really do wish I could come down to you if you really like to have me. Weren't you jolly glad to see that our friend Galsworthy rejected a knighthood with scorn. I couldn't imagine him going in with most modern knights. Well, every word of your letter was interesting, especially those about the man with an ancestor of alabaster. Write to me when you can in whatever script you like, for if N. can't read your writing, and she sometimes fails at critical passages, I rarely find more than one word impossible. Of course I'm sorry I didn't get that last letter typed but I wanted to send it at once. Next time I do anything long it shan't be in writing unless I've an extra pen fit on me. Our love to you. N. forgives you for all this because she is anxious to get practice in shorthand and besides I haven't the least doubt she feels she is taking part in this letter, which makes it in a way a joint production.

Yours ever,

M. R.

Much of the shorthand of this letter was illegible, but I have put in what seems more or less relevant.

# LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE, CORNWALL,  
*January 10th, 1918.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

What has poor old Penzance done to you that you abuse it in that way! It is a poor harmless town but not so unbearable as Falmouth. It looks south and has a front where you can walk by the sea and it is a well-sheltered situation for winter, but I never could endure it in summer. It then gives you a peculiar malady called the 'Penzance headache.' But here I'm within very easy distance of all the spots in West Cornwall where I have friends — Land's End, Zennor, St. Ives, Lelant, Hayle, Phillack, and so on. As soon as I feel well enough I'm going over to look up the Hartleys. But I have not felt well for some days and since I left Looe I haven't written a word except in reply to letters. Here I've hunted up some old books and have spent part of my time reading them. One was *Peter Ibbetson*, which I partly read when it first came out so that it is like a new book to me. Of course there is a whole wonderful world or universe in man's mind which the deadly cut and dried psychologist doesn't know anything about, at all events he keeps away from it, though it is there to be explored by future Columbuses who are not afraid to venture into 'worlds unknown before.' And in the meantime it is left to novelists to play and pick up pebbles on the margin. Of course one recognizes that Du Maurier had something to go on where his hero discovers the way 'to dream right.' I myself have had dream experiences something like that:

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

but he spoils his story by dragging in the supernatural element.

After finishing Peter I took up *Pamela* — a long journey back into the 18th century. I'm surprised to find it quite readable, in spite of many hearty laughs in places where you are not supposed to laugh, but rather to take out your pocket-handkerchief and wipe your eyes. To think that 130 years (about) should have changed the social world to what it is. What would Pamela be now? Instead of casting herself on her knees before the great man who wanted her she would have horsewhipped him and all the newspapers would have applauded her. A little while ago I came on quite a charming passage — a conversation between Mr. B. and Pamela: 'True, Pamela,' said he, 'you chop logic very prettily. What the deuce do we men go to school for? If our wits were equal to women's we might spare much time and pains in our education: for nature teaches your sex what, in a long course of labour and study, ours can hardly attain to. But indeed every lady is not a Pamela.'

This copy is a big old one with numerous copperplates.

Thanks for returning Bats and your careful criticism: but just now I can't see how I can recast the paragraph in the way you suggest without dropping the light and flippant treatment of the whole subject and going deeply and seriously into it. Old Dame Nature couldn't quote Descartes, as when she began to evolve the bat it was long before that Frenchman came upon the scene. The bat probably came a couple of million years before Pithecanthropus erectus: and he lived I daresay a couple of million years ago. Probably he was conscious and rather more

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

thoughtful than the orang-u-tan. But what you say is all extremely interesting and I shall read it over at intervals whenever I have to think about Bats. But I want all these essays to be very light — and I want a title and can't get one.

The weather here has been unspeakably detestable, the whole town and country deep in snow for two days: now a thaw has come and it is wet. The Galsworthys are at Littlehampton and intend staying there till June. I've had two letters from Ada lately — one to-day.

Later on I may go over to Lelant and stay awhile.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE, CORNWALL,  
*April 8th, 1918.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your last letter was dated the middle of March and you see I'm still delaying here in the land of palms and spicy breezes where only man is vile. But I should perhaps have left sooner had I not caught a cold a fortnight ago. Being nervous about 'accidents' as Mackenzie calls them I sent for a Dr. Miller who, I'd been told, is the best man in this poor town. A big dark rough-looking fellow he is, in rough grey tweeds and a cap! The roughness of his bedside manner almost amused me. He told me to keep in till I got over the cold: he wouldn't give me any medicine. 'What, not a tonic?' I demanded sarcastically. He laughed

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

and said one reason of doctors giving too much medicine was that patients wanted it – expected it. That, I retorted, was one but not the chief cause, which was that doctoring means giving medicine to cure ailments and that doctors can't escape the reflex effects of their profession any more than a dyer can escape getting his hands dyed. 'I know,' he said, 'and I try to poison people as little as possible.' I think I must go and have another talk with him before I leave. My cold and cough appear going off now. The Hartleys are leaving St. Ives this week for a holiday somewhere in Somerset. If we have good weather to-morrow I hope to get over to Lelant and see my friends there. The Ranee went back to Ascot about 3 weeks ago and lent her house or cottage to the . . . – 3 maiden ladies of uncertain age who live at Lelant and have had to give up their house. I shall leave here in about a week I think, and may spend a few days at St. Ives or Zennor and a few in Devon before returning to London. Still, I shall be back before you go away, as you say that will be in May. About your verses, you don't say when or if they are to come out. Since this great battle was started a fortnight ago I have been in a constant state of intense anxiety, but I am beginning to hope they will never break through: but good God, what an awful waste of life! I'm still doing some work every day and have got more done perhaps than will ever see the light – I don't expect anything except one small book will come out before the war is over. If I find any violets left at Lelant I'll send a bunch to Naomi.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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TOWER HOUSE,

May 16th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

There were several things to say I forgot when we lunched the other day. One about tickets for the Zoo. I should have asked Naomi if she wanted any, but I'll send a couple and she can have more any time. Another thing was about that trenchant paper you had in *The English Review*, which I read in Penzance. Of course it should have been more extended (as I saw *The Telegraph* said about it) but of course there is an advantage too in saying a great deal in a few words if they have the right edge and temper and are thrust well through the crust — and dug in and then turned. Ruskin says it's no use scratching about the surface if you don't come through with a deep thrust somewhere. But the paper being so short leaves no room for any sort of suggestion as to what you would have in place of existing methods. Still, to work up the feeling of dissatisfaction is important. Undoubtedly a new (and better) Gambetta — no pun intended — is wanted to point to the professions — all of them, but especially the scholastic and medical — and cry — ‘Behold the Enemy!’ If we have schools at all — elementary I mean — they should go on a principle exactly the reverse of the one which we have. I have worked it out in my own mind but need not bore you by going into it. I'm not going to start reformer myself.

I've just come up from Worthing and had some interesting talk there with Don Saturnino Restrepo, a Colum-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

bian gentleman and his fine dark handsome wife, who are in the same house with my wife. He has literary tastes, and was surprised to know that I had written *El Ombu* which he had assisted a Professor Triana (an Argentine) in translating into Spanish.

To-morrow I'm going, or going to try to go to Godalming in quest of a nightingale, and a little refreshment after London. I shall be back soon, I fancy, and then we might meet again if you can make the journey to Whitley's one day.

With love to both,

Yours ever,

W. H. H.

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ELM HOUSE, LELANT, CORNWALL,

Tuesday, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have only just got your card, dropped in the letter box at No. 40 from my servant. She was out when you called, I suppose. I'm sorry I missed you. The Ranee who was coming down here to a place she has taken for a few weeks offered me a seat in her motor-car and I was glad to accept it as I was getting very bad and in despair and like the drowning man in the well-known proverb ready to grasp at any straw. So far I haven't felt any improvement. The heart worries all the time now. I can't walk any distance but have had the car to visit Penzance, St. Buryan and Land's End to look up old friends. I was going to

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Zennor to-day, but the steep streets of St. Ives are rather too much for me at present, and the Hartleys, they tell me, are in London. I have rooms in a nice cottage here close to where the Ranee (with several servants she brought down) is staying, so I generally have my meals with her. Her eldest son — the Raja Mudir — and his wife are motoring down and I hear of others who are coming to join her. I'm doing a little writing but shan't do much if I don't improve as to my heart. Yesterday I was bitterly lamenting the death of Rupert Brooke: I had heard so much of him during the last two or three years that he was almost like a personal acquaintance. *The Times* yesterday had a good deal about him.

Ever yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

June 23rd, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I got your p.c. on my return here from a week at Worthing. Always a p.c.! Yet I can imagine that in that spot where I would like to be you might have found subjects for a letter in the aspects of the old village in the wilderness and the Barle and your piscatorial adventures — whether you caught fishes or not — and in the purple distances, and perhaps a visit from a shaggy horned sheep, who came and stared at you out of his big yellow eyes and asked (mentally) who the devil you were and what the

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

devil you were doing. But I suppose it was too much to expect a letter from so shy and reticent a person as Morley Roberts.

Last night in need of a book to send me to sleep I got hold of *Lanewood Corner* by John Halsham — the writer of *Idlehurst* and read till I slept — and now I'd like to know what you think or thought of this writer of a dozen years ago whose appearance was acclaimed by the critics and set so high above the popular writers of the time. He was, it seems to me, like Gissing in *Ryecroft* and perhaps on that very account in two superior and quite charming books appears already to have fallen into oblivion. His mental attitude is much the same — the peace and exquisite charm he finds in his quiet life of retirement in a village with nature — and his books. He cannot get away from his books and all they have left in his mind and, like Gissing, he is incapable of understanding or believing in a mind that can do with nature pure and simple and find it sufficient for happiness — very pleased to let all books (and of course all paintings) go hang. The Halsham and Ryecroft attitude towards science or 'Science' is identical — it is the enemy, the (word illegible) and cause of all the philistinism and uglification of the earth and life. And all this seems futile. Things are what they are. If we can't arrest or overcome the forces of nature it is weak to shed tears, albeit they sometimes charm us with the lovely prismatic colours that shine in them as they roll down the weeper's cheeks. Nevertheless, there's some gentle wisdom in Halsham, especially on the question of elementary education in the rural districts — the Cockney system applied to the little yokels. I am in agreement with the late

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Bishop Creighton idea that no boy should be shut up in school till he is twelve years old. For the rural districts now particularly. The Schoolmaster—who, no matter what the *system* is, cannot escape the disastrous reflex actions of his profession on himself—will not then find it so easy to rub out the boy's soul.

Of course the paper you read<sup>1</sup> was a great success. I was sitting by Sir Henry Howorth—the old ragged vulture-looking man I introduced to you, author of *The Mammoth* and *The Flood* and a score of other books—and tho' he didn't like the cathedral illustrations he was quite delighted at the paper. He said he had never heard of you except as a writer of novels, and in replying to the critics he thought you delightfully amusing. I could hear every word of your paper, being near the desk, but unfortunately I couldn't follow the old bald-headed white-moustached biological Professor on account of his trick of wheeling and jerking round and throwing a few sentences in my direction and then facing the other way and talking to your far end group. Nor could I follow all of Professor . . . remarks. . . .

Long is your lesson, quod I,  
And letel am I the wiser.

But it struck me that it would have been better if you could all have come to a preliminary agreement as to the word Pathology. For instance the lean hatchet-faced gentleman who spoke just behind me and wanted to know how an aneurism could affect a heart favourably appeared

<sup>1</sup> *The Function of Pathological States in Evolution*, read before the Zoological Society.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

to have missed the real meaning of your contention and to have gone off into a sort of blind alley.

The paper, I hope, will produce a sensation when printed, but in the Society's Proceedings it won't reach the thousands of readers it would have if you could have got it into the *British Medical Journal*. They will give you some separate copies of the paper and perhaps you could get a larger number by paying for them. I hope you'll send me a copy.

These are perilous times in London: a furious epidemic, Influenza, and it has invaded us here. My housekeeper is down with it, and I had to go for a doctor and a woman to attend her. Rather a difficult task too. I found my poor local doctor just in from a day's hard work examining new recruits and at first he refused to stir from his house, but after a while he relented and came to see the woman. It took her very suddenly, the temperature rushed up to 100 and the pulse to 130. Now, if I get it I can't stand that strain as Mackenzie warned me ; but here I am and only hope I shall escape.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

June 27th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am going to answer your letter at once instead of treating it with proper respect by letting it lie a few days

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

on the table. But it is not only to reply that I am writing – I had also something to say about which I've been shy and shirking for some time past. To come to your letter first. Yes, I did see your 'scream' in *The English Review* and was highly pleased to read it – if one can see and read a scream! – as it puts, brilliantly, in scientific language, what is so deeply and painfully being felt by many of us. I was in Penzance and I had long ceased to take or look at the magazine, much as I admired the lively and exceedingly clever young burro Austin, but when he is too lively and kicks up his heels too high he is apt to get offensive, and I have something of the feeling of that person in the fable whose burro danced playfully round and finally jumped on and embraced him. But seeing your article I bought the magazine and quite intended writing to you about the paper, only the subject slipped out of memory every time I wrote. Another thing of yours I liked was your sonnet quoted in yesterday's *Telegraph*. It is exceedingly good although unfortunately the last line drops into prose. That last line in a sonnet is a frightfully difficult thing to do well. However in spite of it your sonnet and Arnold Bennett's bit of prose were the two best things in the entire collection – or in the selection given by the *D.T.* – the best of the lot I suppose.

So far I have escaped influenza and no one else in the house has taken it. My housekeeper is well now though still too weak to leave her room. She is bitter against the inhabitants of Tower House for having avoided her 'as if she had the plague,' when they all expect her to fly to their help whenever they have any illness or trouble. I tell her (to comfort her) that she is a bad-tempered unreason-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

able woman and, worst of all, is lacking in a sense of humour, like all her countrymen — the wild half-naked barbarians who come to us from the far north — from Caledonia stern and wild. That only serves to put her in a fresh rage and she asks what would have become of England if it wasn't for the Scots in this war — especially the Black Watch in which her young husband has been fighting since the war began!

You don't know Halsham but he is a beautiful writer and you would agree with his denunciations of the deadly school system in the rural districts. He is in some things more virile than Gissing of the Ryecroft papers. But how much greater G.G. was in his *Born in Exile*! I've just read that book again — the third time — and find it a greater book than ever.

I hope you will get an abstract of your evolution paper in the *B.M.J.*.

And now what I want to ask you is Will you let me put your name down in my will — last will and testament if you please — as Executor — one of two? Of course I mean to leave the few hundreds I shall die possessed of to my wife, with the exception of two or three trivial legacies: but when she goes I want all that remains to go to our Bird Protection Society; and to see to that part of the business I must have another man. And he, I hope, will be Ernest Bell — the publisher — a man of the most beautiful character, who spends his life and money in working for causes with which I am in sympathy. As one of the supporters of this particular Society — he is on the Council — he will see to that matter best. I have to see and consult with him about it and in the meantime when you next

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

write tell me if you are willing. I want to make the will sometime before the winter — the season I fear — comes back on us, and I shall be compelled to go away from this part of England. I only wish I could go to Portugal — a nice warm wintering country.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

P.S. — I am just doing the proofs of the book *Long Ago and Far Away*.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, S.W.II.,

1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I wish that when you come across a physiologist you would put this question to him. Is it pure assumption on your part — or the part of some of you — that the outer ear in man has lost its use as an aid to hearing, or has it been proved by experiments? Some popularizing scientists of the Grant Allen type take it upon themselves to say things without sufficient warrant. I want to know as the possessor of a pair of large ears which I don't want to believe quite functionless. Somehow they have got fastened to the head but I don't think they could ever have been free as the trumpet ear in mammals, although they probably had the power of lying flat against the head when listening to sounds from outside and rear and of coming forwards to catch sounds from the front. And no doubt they were much larger in primitive man — about the size of a half

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

teacup saucer. As thus –<sup>1</sup> (size of ears probably exaggerated).

Well, that's all, except that I'm down with a cold.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE,

July 15th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Shall be delighted to grub at Whiteley's with you and Naomi on Wednesday. No, I haven't caught the flu so far. Thanks for the book which I've read for the last two nights and have just sent off to my wife to read. I liked best 'The Man who Lost his Likeness,' 'Mates' and 'The Madonna' – the love stories: 'The Duchess' next after these three, and think it would make a good one act play. The wild and woolly west yarns I didn't like so much as these four. 'Mates' is the best story in the book to my mind – and perhaps to yours. It goes more to one's heart. I lunched to-day with Dr. C. N. Groves, a highly considered doctor in Bayswater, and was telling him about your Pathology in Evolution paper, and he is anxious to see it, and believes your theories are right. He had read your paper in the *B.M.J.* and had been told that you had had a medical education. He is a friend of Sir J. Mackenzie and knows most of the leading men in the medical world. I've promised to send him the paper to read when I get a

<sup>1</sup> Rough sketch. See letter reproduced in *W. H. Hudson: A Portrait*.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

copy. Don't forget it when you get it. What a fine book Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* is! His Cardinal Manning especially.

With love,  
Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE, ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

September 9th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

All right: very well. I hope you'll remember not to forget when you see Professor Keith and ask him. One of your great men, who flowers in the magazines, has said that if we all had our external ears removed we would be just as well off as with them. I am interested just now in the subject from having been writing something about the trumpet ears of the stag and it leads me to this question of the use to us of our external ears. I only wish I had the health and strength to go out into a windy woody rocky place with a couple of pounds of modeller's wax and a few trumpet ears made of indiarubber and some other things and experiment myself. I suppose by simply making the ears non-existent with wax, having only the passage free one could find out how little or how much the external ear helps hearing. Also I want to find out if the trumpet ear in animals makes the roaring and flapping sounds as in our case. I fancy they avoid that nuisance owing to the ease with which they can move the ear and prevent the

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

wind hitting the inside just at the angle at which the noise is produced. Doubtless by having our ears made fast we have lost a great deal without any compensation. Our poor noses are in the same sad state. But that's a *tarrable* long question. So for that matter is the wind in its action and effect on us. So is every question.

I'm still keeping indoors but my cold's no worse and I may get out a little to-morrow for an hour or two unless it should be cold and rough. I've just finished Trevelyan's<sup>1</sup> *Record of Shelley and Byron*, a most readable book about old unhappy things. Ages ago when I read his *Adventures of a Younger Son* I came to the conclusion that, like Burrows, he continually mixed truth with lies. But I don't think he invents much about Byron and Shelley.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

September 17th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

If I can — if I get strength enough — I'll go one day before you migrate to the nursing home. I was out fairly well yesterday but had a dreadful attack of heart trouble last night so am weak and bad again. I gave up trying to read all your letter until now. It was written in a microscopic hand, a kind of grasshopper writing and I couldn't

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny's.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

for the life of me make out the last sentence or two. Now I see that it is the offer of a movable ear and nose. Well, I don't know what they mean. Just now I've dropped the wind and am retouching a long chapter on Earthworms.<sup>1</sup> I discovered a good deal about them, which Darwin didn't know, long ago and have never made use of it.

Of course I meant Trelawny. You knew that all along! I had been corresponding with a Trevelyan and that got a wrong name in my head. The *Younger Son* is not a bad book of adventure, but when one gets absorbed in scientific questions one loses interest in such books. I can manage to read *Tristram Shandy* just now though it is one of the first books of that kind I ever read. Well, it is the only book of its kind: but it was among the first books of pure fiction.

Very beautiful weather just now — and I can't enjoy it.

With love to both,

W. H. H.

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TOWER HOUSE,

September 22nd, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm sorry I can't quite make out the last half of your p.c. about movable ears and noses and the Neanderthal neck or skull. Perhaps you'll remember to tell me about it when I see you. If possible, I'll go one day this week.

I did not say (as you make me say) that *Tristram*

<sup>1</sup> Last chapter of *The Book of a Naturalist*.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

*Shandy* was the first book of fiction ever written! What I did say was (perhaps my writing was not clear) that *T. S.* was the first book of fiction I read – but I meant English fiction, seeing that I had read the *Arabian Nights*. Of course I know that *The Golden Ass* was written 15 or 16 centuries before Sterne was born, and that the ‘lost tales of Miletus’ which Apuleius imitated were written before he was born, and that ‘Miletus’ got his inspiration from some one who flourished a thousand years before him and he in his turn got it out of the Neanderthal skull, when it had some brains in its cavity. I never see the *B.M.J.* so don’t know about your paper. Yesterday evening Galsworthy and Ada made a sudden appearance here much to my amazement, as I never have any one visit me now. They are going to live at Hampstead and are very well.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE,

September 30th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Yours this morning. I don’t know about the afternoon yet but couldn’t you and Naomi manage to lunch with me at Whiteley’s on Wednesday at 1 o’clock – or thereabouts? It would be the last meeting I fancy for some time, as I’m just about to get rid of my flat for 6 months. I have half a dozen applicants and so think I’ll settle on one by Wednesday next by noon. I hope you will both be able to come once more. As soon as I get rid of the place I

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

shall go down to Worthing for a while before looking for winter quarters nearer to the sun. I've had three letters the last two days from Penzance and Zennor describing the tremendous gales, flooding rains and cold they are having in that part. So far I've only read the poems superficially, in a hurry, but shall take them more gently now. But I don't think there's a new one to me I like more than *The Merchantmen*. That's really one of the best poems the war has produced. In the words, the form, the movement, you've caught the spirit of the thing — the wonderful spirit of the ships and souls that still jog along.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

I shall be there at W's at 1 on Wednesday.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*October 22nd, 1918.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I found the passage in *South Wind* soon after you left. It is one of Keith's everlasting preachments in which he takes young Denis to task for letting himself drift as it were and advises him to go through a course of Samuel Butler. As a warning! He (S. B.) is bewildered by phenomena. It was an age of giants; Darwin and so on: their facts were too much for him: drove him into a clever perversity of humour. His catlike touches and fondness for scoring off everybody from the Deity downwards. Anything to escape from realities — that was his maxim.

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

There was his *Odyssey* book. He was a puzzle, now we can locate him with certainty. He personifies the Revolt from Reason. The giants irked him and to revenge himself he laid penny crackers under the pedestals. Some more in this same style and I suppose there is a grain of truth in it. I enclose a cutting *to be destroyed*. This same Lynd has written another review of the book in *Everyman*.

The evening after you were here I had the pain back again and it has continued till now, but is getting less and less to-day. Otherwise I'm just the same and suppose it is best to wait a little longer as the Dr. thinks it will go off.

Oct. 23. I got up this morning and feel well enough except that I still have that troublesome pain at intervals.<sup>1</sup> . . . Have just had a long letter from Lord Grey about his blindness. He can't read at all; he says he's having my book read to him. He sees just well enough to walk and cycle but everything appears like a blurred photograph. He can also fish, but I should think he would hardly catch the dimple of a trout as he only does the dry-fly.

Yours with love,

W. H. H.

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14 BEDFORD ROW, WORTHING,

November 17th, 1918.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm still here and in much about the same state as when I came. That's to say I feel perfectly well and always have

<sup>1</sup> See *W. H. Hudson, A Portrait*, p. 117.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

a good appetite and digestion now, but there lingers some slight derangement of the bladder still. No pain at all practically just as I described it to you when you came to see me before I came down here. You say in your letter that if Pardoe's drugs don't do the trick I should try 10 grains of Urotropine in water 3 times a day, and a small teaspoonful of sod. acid phosphate in water two hours before and after the urotropine. The question is: can I try experiments of this sort on myself after what he, Pardoe, said about urotropine when I asked him if he was giving it, and he said, 'No, something much better'?

Of course there are plenty of doctors here, good, bad, and indifferent, but I think I shall wait a few days longer, then either consult one of them or go back and see Pardoe again. Influenza is still raging undiminished here and schools have been closed since I came a fortnight ago. A good many die of pneumonia. Still, that has not kept the people here from wild demonstrations on the supposed peace. I hate the place and have never yet met anyone in it who has been of any use to me. It is talk, talk, talk, but never a gleam of an original or fresh remark or view of anything that does not come out of a book and newspaper. The Colombian gentleman who lives here is always wanting to have me to talk to of an evening: he is steeped to the lips in literary lore — English, Spanish, French, German and Italian — he reads all but he knows nothing about nature — the earth we live on, and so I come empty and hungry away from our interminable colloquies. Mrs. Hudson is well and sends best regards. With love to both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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14 BEDFORD ROW, WORTHING,

*November 24th, 1918.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Pardoe wrote to me and sent a new prescription. Four ingredients and urotropine is one. After taking it three days I feel quite recovered, or very nearly so, and if it goes on all right I shall be going up to London this week to settle things and get ready to travel to Penzance. It is the best I can do. I can't stand the cold here and down there I have rooms in North Parade facing the south and sheltered by the town and high grounds from the north and east. It is about the warmest spot in Penzance and my quaint old landlady writes that I can have the same rooms. Then I may be able to do this little book<sup>1</sup> about the seventeen or twenty senses we are endowed with. I've just done a chapter on the sense of smell. When I get up I'll write to you to see if you and Naomi will have lunch with me before I leave London. Yesterday was the first fine bright day we had had here for a fortnight and I was out and sitting on the front for 2 or 3 hours.

With love to both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> *A Hind in Richmond Park*, published after Hudson's death.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*December 12th, 1918.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

The above's my address for the winter, only as my rooms are not ready for me yet I'm staying this week at another house. And my landlady's name is Ilfra Raxborough! She has a little girl of the same name and I was curious to know its origin. She told me her grandfather, an Ilfracombe man, invented the name for her mother and it has since gone on from generation unto generation. I have a slight cold and as the weather is abominable — rain and furious wind — I have to stay in much to my disgust as I've paid a winter subscription to the Penzance Library and had intended spending these first days in it looking up references and reading anything I may be able to find about the five-and-twenty senses of man. Last time I went out a big motor-car rushing past on the front pulled up and the man hailed me. He was the doctor I told you about — the one man in Penzance who is interested in everything and eager to talk about it. I had to tell him about myself and mentioned Pardoe. 'Oh, he's an old friend of mine!' he exclaimed. I spent a few days in Exeter, staying at the Queen's Hotel, and having a slight relapse I have just got a bottle of Pardoe's last medicine and hope it will put me all right again. Let me have a copy of your paper on Pathology as a factor in Evolution as soon as you get it.

I shall be glad to get back to my old lodgings where the rooms are warm, both having a south aspect, and my queer

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

old landlady will provide me with unlimited butter, cream, jam and all other rare luxuries. With love to you both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

### III

23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 24th, 1918.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm a little anxious about you as you spoke of Fitzroy Nursing Home as your probable destination in your post-card. I want to know how and where you are. I am now at this address, my old ancient lodgings where I'm much more comfortable than in the others I had to spend 8 or 9 days at when I came. I got a cold about a week ago and as the weather has been abominable — furious north wind and rain all the time — I've had to keep pretty much indoors. I think it is going off now and the weather is improving. Don't imagine that I am making a catalogue of the senses. I'm not, and for all I know may not even mention some of them. I only use the observations I have made and my notions about the subject. There are of course several obscure and mysterious senses possessed by certain persons about which next to nothing is known, the Odylic sense for example — the faculty a few persons possess of seeing luminous emanations. It has no use that one can imagine, it is confined to few persons, and would probably be dismissed as a mere fancy but for the fact that Reichenbach was a great scientist. About such things

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

there's nothing to be said since one can say nothing illuminating. What most interests me just now is the sense of smell — the small vestige of that sense which we still possess. I've done 3 or 4 chapters on that theme and I hope they've got something original in them. Owing to the cold and the weather I've not been able to go over to Lelant in search of violets yet, or I should have sent a bunch to Naomi by way of a Xmas card.

I hope to hear soon and with love to you both.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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LONDON,

*December, 1918.*

MY DEAR HUDSON,

Thanks for your letter. I'm glad you're fixed up in your old quarters where you will be comfortable. I hope the cold is quite well. As to the weather I'm not surprised it's been damp, for it's been pretty bad here though yesterday when the President came to London it was really gorgeous. Naomi and I went down to see him. She thought very little of him but I regard her opinion in this matter as prejudiced. She has an unholy passion for kings and thinks presidents a very poor invention. My own opinion is that he has a very remarkable and powerful face and everyone that I spoke to who saw him agrees with me in this.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I did not imagine that you were making a catalogue of the senses. I know you far too well for that. I shall never go to you for catalogues but only for big and powerful suggestions. Of course you and I take different views about many of these things. Perhaps I have become more and more rigidly scientific in the way I think. At any rate I'm inclined nowadays to regard phenomena which one can't hope to weigh or measure, at some time in human history, as things which are negligible except in a literary or what one might call without prejudice a 'spiritual' sense. Personally I do not believe there are any obscure or mysterious senses. Those facts or supposed facts which are held to prove their existence are I think really inferences or the results of certain ancient instinctive ways of thinking. These ways of thought seem to be not increasing but to be dying out. Telepathy, for instance, if it really occurs as I often think, is the remains of some method of communication peculiar to a crowd which lacks speech. Concerning the odylic I know nothing whatever about it and frankly I believe less. As to those people who see luminous emanations or visible auras I think such visions are truly hallucinations. They appear to occur for the most part to people in bad health or at any rate in very delicate health. I know nothing of Reichenbach. He may be a great scientist but I never came across his name nor can I find it in the index of the Encyclopedia. At any rate his dictum on the subject is worth no more than that of anybody else. I know you were always interested in the sense of smell or what is left to us and should you write about it I shall be very much interested to see what you have to say. My own sense of smell has almost entirely disappeared since I

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

had nasal trouble, but curiously enough after one operation on the nose it returned to me acutely, much to my disgust, for I found the smell of London perfectly damnable. I had no idea at all that I had been living in such a world of smell. Of course it's a loss to have none in the country, especially when there are flowers about. I can still smell faintly the fragrance of a rose and when I see one I recognize that it's a little sad to have so little power of appreciation. I don't think I have much more to say about this but when I get at what you have written I might be able to make a few suggestions, if you care to have them from such an incurable agnostic as myself.

Naomi thanks you very much for your desire to go over to Lelant and get violets for her but she and I both hope you won't run any risks for such a purpose till the weather gets fine. Let me know if you see or hear anything of A. H. I should like a report on him and Nora. When I wrote to him as I usually do at Christmas I told him where you were.

With love from us both,  
Always yours,

M. R.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*January 1st, 1919.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your p.c. received and also a long and interesting letter (dated the 13th) which I shouldn't be surprised to hear had not been answered. I have not been feeling well for

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

the last week or so — the old heart trouble and that makes me remiss. I can't get exercise enough and that's the main trouble: I go out for very short walks, as a rule to the Library when I get two or three or four books to glance over of an evening and return the next day — unless I find one I can read through. Now about Odyl and odylic force, I've nothing to do with such a subject and don't know any more about it than anyone else — and what they know or I know is nil. Years ago I had a complete account of Reichenbach's researches and his experiments prove that such a force or emanation or whatever it may be called is a fact, and even the fool who wrote the *Ency. Brit.* article on the subject doesn't deny it although it is of course a part of the scientist's religion to deny the existence of all phenomena he can't correlate with the physical laws he knows. I had a faint revival of interest in the subject about four years ago when a lady friend told me a strange experience she had met with — seeing a man she knew out of doors on a very bright morning with his head surrounded by a blue mist or haze which continued as long as she kept her eyes on him — about half an hour. She had never heard of such a thing or of odyl, and is quite sane and no more subject to delusions than I am. She's in fact devoted to athletics — a champion tennis player, a writer of a manual of the game. How odd it seems that in Dr. Emile Beirac's *Psychic Science* which I have just seen reviewed in *The Times*, he comes to the conclusion that there is a force or form of energy for which he revives the old name of 'animal magnetism.' Then too we have the wonderful work of that most patient investigator Dr. Von Schrenk — No, Notzing — that really *is* his name and he is

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

a German ('I regret to say,' as Pulezieff would remark) and he has been investigating spiritualistic phenomena for 25 years and published his work just when the war began, which accounts for the fact that we know little about it. His investigations prove the existence of ghosts, and he has been led to the conclusion that there is no ghost *without a medium* — the ghost is an emanation or force from the *Medium* and is a materialization. His work is entitled *Materialistic Phenomena and Contributions to the investigation of Mediumistic Manifestations*. You needn't sneer at the title or the man's name, or at his being a German. But if you get hold anywhere of an account of the man's 25 years of patient careful experiments and the marvellous results he obtained in the case of one of his mediums you will find he has put the ghost and other super-normal phenomena where many of us have always believed to be his proper place, among other natural phenomena. My own idea is that though his work has a great value his theory is false, since it does not account for all ghosts, but only for those he has seen produced by his mediums. You will perhaps say, with Sir R. L. that scientific men have difficult enough problems to deal with without running after ghosts, or 'going a-ghost-hunting.' Well, everything in nature interests me, and I should only lose my interest in ghosts, or clouds, or dust-drops in a spider's web, if someone could convince me that they are not to be explained — that they are not amenable to any natural law. So that's that.

I wonder if you ever read Sir Ronald Ross's Scientific Quarterly — *Science Progress* — well, not his but Murray's, only he edits it. His position in letters as the *defender of*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

*poetry* as well as the giant he believes himself to be in the world of science is one of the funniest things I know.

With love to both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

It may be noted that Hudson's belief in the 'reality' of these manifestations never drew him from his strictly agnostic, and even more than agnostic, standpoint as regards 'spiritual' phenomena. If they occurred they were the natural concomitants of matter, or 'body,' as we know it. They were in fact, to use the word 'material' for what it is worth, purely material. If a 'ghost' existed it could, and would, also die.

Hudson's good-humoured scoffing at men like Sir Ray Lankester and Sir Ronald Ross was due largely to his ignorance of the work done by both of them. No student of general zoology, or of that complicated section of it which deals practically with tropical diseases, has anything but deep respect for their labours. Hudson's sense of humour, however, was at times a little too much for him and he could not resist a dig at those who seem occasionally somewhat too 'serious-minded.'

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

January 8th, 1919.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I fancy it is time to send a line 'to let you know' my cold still abides with me. It vanishes and then I go out

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and after a cold blast it springs up and catches me in the face and I find it is with me still. Weather still detestable — never a day without one to a dozen rain storms, and occasionally a rain that lasts all day. Well, it's got to be endured. Many thanks for the book<sup>1</sup> and its dedication: I've read some of the stories before but am reading them all now and find I can enjoy them a second time. Your last letter was interesting but when you say 'Of course you and I take different views about many of these things' you don't put the position fairly or rightly. What you mean is that no one, however great his mental curiosity may be, can occupy his mind with more than one thing, or a very few things, at one and the same time: nor can he escape the delusion that the thing that occupies his mind at any moment is intrinsically more important than the particular thing his friend's mind happens to be occupied with at the same moment. And so quite inevitably he says 'Pooh — pooh!' Then, suppose you look at two subjects: one, let us say, certain peculiarities in the heart which appear to point out to certain happenings in the far past history of that organ, indicating perhaps a greater strain being put upon it owing to new and more complex conditions of life having supervened, which in time had to be met by fresh safeguarding modifications and even additions of the structure. Is that any more interesting or *important* than the subject and question of Telepathy? I fancy not. There may be something in your suggestion that speech has taken the place and caused the decay and atrophy of other methods of communication between mind and mind in man; and the same idea has been often suggested about

|      <sup>1</sup> *Ancient Mariners*, 1919.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

animals — birds especially, but I can't find anything in all I've seen to give it support. The trained eye and hearing and movements in birds, in their flight and evolutions, in great masses, when they open and close and scatter, and move again together, is all to be accounted for without any mind process. Telepathy may have existed from the time of the sub-human species of the Pliocene period for all we know, but I prefer to think of it not as a fading faculty of the past but as an incipient one, and one perhaps of many mental faculties which will develop with the growth of the human brain. The odylic force or whatever one may call it, is a pure mystery and as the scientists fail to explain it they naturally dismiss the subject in their usual contemptuous manner. A good example of the way they treat a subject of that kind is to be seen in the article in the *Ency. Brit.* One must remember that when a new edition of this work is wanted, the commercial-minded persons who do it hire the experts and professors to write the article wanted. The Editor is of course a great professional scientist who takes the professional view as a matter of course. Hence you will find the matter treated in the most unfair way and Reichenbach, whose experiments first proved the existence of odyl, spoken of as if he was a charlatan. You have only to remember that such was the way the phenomena of hypnotism were treated by the scientists; and that after the thing had been scientifically proved by numerous experiments they maintained that attitude for — 300 years! That's a sample of the scientific professor's open mind! But enough of this subject! I can't yet finish my chapter on smell and I can't find anything in the books to help me.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

I've got two chapters and want a third. Have you ever known a case of Antipathy — a violent *instinctive* fear and hatred of something — some animal as a rule? I have. I know there is such a thing: it is as well known as hypnotism was 300 years before the Professors admitted its existence: but you won't find it in the psychological books, and the *Ency. Brit.* doesn't mention it!

I hope you are still keeping well. With love to both.  
Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

Every day I receive letters from America from readers of *Far Away* so I suppose the book is having a success on the other side.

I'm very much cut up at the death of my old enemy and friend Roosevelt who has both abused and praised me. *He*, I believe, did more to rouse the war-temper in America than anyone: I doubt if it had not been for him that Wilson would ever have come in. After Roosevelt's scathing reply to the 'We-are-too-proud-to-fight' declaration he had to pocket that kind of pride. Still, I love him for what he did do in the end — and for his visit to Carlisle and his speech in a little chapel. Nothing of the Snob in Wilson!

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LONDON,

January, 1919.

DEAR HUDSON,

I am glad to hear from you but sorry that you can't kill that cold. You shouldn't go out when it's windy or

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anything like that. As for me I just go along working a little and hope to get the first draft of the book done in a few more days. Bad as you may be I envy you being away from town and wish that I was at St. Ives at any rate. I'm glad you got the book: I had hopes that you would like at least two of the stories. I hardly know what my last letter was about but it seems to me that it must have been rather nasty, the way you jump on me. Of course you're quite right when you say however great a man's intellectual curiosity may be that it won't let him deal with two things at a time. Perhaps that's why I seem to have let you think I took no interest at all in telepathy, for instance. I do take an interest in it and have personal reasons for thinking it occurs: so has N. Yet I think you and I do take different views as regards some of these things because of late I have been more apt to deal with things which can in a way be proved, weighed, measured and classified. That does not in the least mean that I object to others hunting beyond the bounds of knowledge or possible proof. It is by way of intelligent surmise and perpetual hypotheses that we find out anything. But if I show no particular sympathy with Reichenbach and Odylic force how can you blame me? I know something about hypnotism from the times of Braid, and Heidenhain, to say nothing of Charcot and Luis as well as something which is done by those who practise hypnotism in the medical profession, such as Bramwell of Goole. The more one knows about it the more one sees there is no need to posit any force to explain any phenomena that we observe. There is nothing in hypnotism which is not analogous with perfectly normal states of mind and brain and any other explanation of a purely hypothe-

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tical character is superfluous, or so I think myself. Of course there are people who believe in auras and I understand they are attributed to Odyl. Whether there is any foundation for the idea I do not quite know. The facts as put before us look very much like hallucination and if they are not we have to rely on people's words and cannot obtain verification. However, to go on about telepathy, it may be of course that you're quite right and that the faculty, if it really exists, as I think, is a growing one. I don't see how we can prove that it is or that it isn't. All I said was that if it was a dying faculty we might naturally infer that speech was destroying it. It is a little difficult to see how it should come to grow when means of human communication are increasing so greatly from day to day. Of course I see in a way the reason of your savage remarks on scientific people. They are very often a bit too sceptical, but after all it's a very good fault. It's perfectly impossible to keep any science in order or within bounds if every wild and interesting suggestion is accepted at once. All ideas must necessarily be forced to justify themselves by proof except with those who are using them as hypotheses and endeavouring to get at the truth that way. If you remember that the whole tendency of physicists and all scientific people is to discredit the root idea of 'force' you get to see why they are so intensely reluctant to accept any mystery as the explanation of other mysteries. You may think this unjust but I only put it roughly. Personally I don't believe that any experiment by anybody proves the existence of Odylic force. So far as I know anything about it, and I own I know very little, it's very like vitalism, which is a word that takes for granted the very phenomena we are

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trying to explain. If you were to force me to say what I think, I should say that it was persons like Reichenbach, and others of the same hasty and enthusiastic character, who got what truth they had arrived at discredited by calm inquirers or critics. When you complain that what truth there is in mesmerism had to wait 300 years to be recognized, well, there was truth in Paracelsus and in many quacks and charlatans, but it was always the claim to magic forces which got them discredited. I see myself no great harm in very obscure things having to wait 300 years. There are truths in Hippocrates, 600 B.C. which are not yet really well known and certainly time and time again the Hippocratic method of patient observation was swamped by hasty theorists who wanted to settle a whole new system of medicine on some hurried theory. So long did this last that it was really not until Sydenham's time that the Hippocratic and shall I say Aristotelian and Baconian method was reintroduced into practical medicine. One could multiply examples out of all patience? That man is indeed lucky who sees any new discovery recognized in his own time. But one could talk for ever on this subject and I must shut up. Don't think I don't understand Academism. Look at it in biology with nine out of ten of the professors absolutely asphyxiated with Weismannism.

I, too, am sorry that Roosevelt has gone so suddenly. He wasn't at all a bad chap. Some one said he was a rather little big man. You may be interested to know that N. and I stood in Pall Mall to see Wilson and the King go past. For my own part I thought I had rarely seen a stronger face than Wilson's. He was a 9 point 5 howitzer compared with our King who looked very tragic. But I

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

wonder whether he's got the patience and perseverance and time to deal with the appalling tangle in which Europe now finds itself. It's very difficult for the American to understand what national terror is. So far they have lived in a more or less stable house and we over here are housed over crumbling and trembling volcanic ruins.

With love from N. and myself and apologies for any scientific or semi-scientific bumpitiousness I may have displayed.

I am yours ever M. R.

P.S. – Bless my heart, what should we know of the upper air if it wasn't for eagles, so don't mind how much you beat your wings in the empyrean if you are able to endure more rarefied air than myself. We still have the earth to meet on. I love speculation and speculators. Heaven knows I've done enough of it myself, if I have come down to a yard stick and a pair of scales.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*February 10th, 1919.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have your letter and am glad you are getting on so well. About myself, I can't say I'm getting on with my work 'slowly' since I haven't touched it since I came over 3 months ago. I've been getting weaker instead of improving and had to drop medicine as my heart trouble had reached that stage when taking digitalis is only flogging a tired horse for nothing. Dr. Sir J. Mackenzie had told

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me when to drop it, and Dr. Miller here was only astonished at having given me the old-fashioned tincture to take which can't be relied on — he thought all the swell physicians had dropped it long ago since it is so variable and never to be relied on. The only reliable form is the digitaline, a French invention, and I took it a little and got some benefit: then it, too, failed to do any good so I'm not to touch any drug now until I get over the phase or go out altogether. That's enough of my case. The poem is not too bad only of course it ends weakly and flatly. But the thought is one of the commonest in poetry, and you meet with it especially in William Morris, and it is indeed that feeling for life and nature which makes me a reader and liker of his verses. He doesn't know much about nature from the science point of view. He *thinks* he knows all common wild flowers, but even then goes wrong at times, and so little about birds that he is afraid to mention any but the cormorant. But he worships the earth and sea and sky, and the earth especially, when it rains and when it shines, when fields are white with snow, or green in summer and better still when yellow with harvest, and when not he only but all men are happy in the sights and sounds and smells of earth, and happy in their toil. What wonder that he abhorred the very thought of death and that the very remembrance of death is the only sad thing in his works. I suppose that no man ever accomplished more in 30 years than Morris, and every hour of it devoted to art work. But the art he was devoted to was not the art of Swinburne and Tennyson, or of Watts and Rossetti in painting, or in any great thing done in any art for art's sake. He admired some of their work — he couldn't help

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admiring the beautiful, but he despised the ideals of those who set art above life, who imagine the highest thing men can do is to create something exquisite that has no relation to life. And so when he wrote poetry — a dozen volumes of it first and last — he wrote it as it seemed best in conformity with his own theory of life and art: he was then just the ‘idle singer of an empty day.’ It was mainly to tell a tale, to fill a vacant interval, to give a charm and interest to the periods of rest and recreation of his solid work — and even so to make his poetry come into his scheme. Occasionally you come upon a passage of deep feeling that fascinates you and then perhaps you have four or five hundred lines, just a little above commonplace and sometimes falling below it — the most careless, even sloppy, go-as-you-please sort of verse ever written. He never tried to recapture the magic of that first book of his with the Blue Closet and the Defence of Guinevere and the Haystack beside the Flood — or whatever the title was — I haven’t read it these 30 years, and for the very good reason that he had outgrown that stage and had come to the stage when a man can despise perfection in art as not a thing great enough for man. That has been my idea and I don’t know of any great man except Morris who has lived up to it, on which account I put him far far above the great artists of his day.

But I’m getting prolix and I don’t suppose you, even with the help of Naomi and two or three microscopes or magnifiers, will be able to make the screed out.

With love to both,  
Yours,

W. H. H.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

I believe that the poem which gave rise to this criticism and very sound defence of William Morris, in whom Hudson always took great interest, was *A Happy Ghost* by Dorothea Mackellar. Hudson's own views of art for art's sake were fairly scornful and, so far as I know, this letter is perhaps the one piece of his writing in which he expresses his native dislike of the 'pure artist,' in painting or poetry, who stands aside from life, or, at the least, considers art, especially his own, as the highest form of life. Such an artist was, he believed, a dreadful example of general atrophy combined with unbalanced hypertrophy. Perhaps any unprejudiced survey of these 'pure artists' will convince many that this conclusion is a healthy one and that the amateur in art, and Morris always remained one, is a far more desirable citizen of this world than the professional. During the most critical part of the late war I met one of our best-known writers in the street where he detained me for over ten minutes in an east wind while he complained bitterly that he could not get a particular book, which had nothing to do with the crisis, printed and published. The man was an artist, that was not to be doubted, but his devotion to art made him perilously akin to those known by alienists as querulous egocentric paranoiacs.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

DEAR ROBERTS,

February 21st, 1919.

I have your letter of the 11th also of the 17th which I haven't answered yet. Glad you are well and progressing

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with the work. I know from many letters I've had the hideous weather in London. Here it is comparatively mild: in fact it is full spring now with the chaffinches singing quite gaily and the air soft and warm; but the flooding rains continue every day. I'm all right at the present moment but lamenting the death of Stephen Reynolds whom I have known since his father quarrelled with him because he wouldn't be a doctor, and sent him off without a shilling to sink or swim. He did a little journalism and falling ill gave up respectability and went into fishing at Sidmouth. Then he wrote *A Poor Man's House* and began to be successful and was finally appointed an Inspector of Fishing on the Devon and Cornish coast. Every year when I came here I looked for him, and was expecting him when I read of his death in the papers — only 37 and one of the healthiest and strongest men I knew.

What you say in your letter of the 11th about ghosts, etc., makes me wonder at your attitude towards such questions and their investigators. I wonder because you are an amateur and stand outside the circle of experimenters and professors, each engaged in his special department, looking on at all they do, therefore taking a more comprehensive view of things. Why then adopt their mental attitude towards the outsider who investigates independently — the attitude of the priest at the time when the priest's attitude mattered? The professor suffers from a mental vice which he can't help, and you defend him and call it a virtue! In his defence you give a wrong account of hypnotism and say that it dates from Mesmer, in 1724, and *therefore* it has only taken 200 years to have

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

the whole thing built up. It did *not* begin with Mesmer: it was old in his day and most of his knowledge was old – of the 16th and 17th centuries: and it was *not* admitted. He, too, like those who came before him, was damned as a humbug and put out of court and not till Renan in about 1841 was it allowed that such phenomena had any existence at all. The earliest conclusive experiments we know of (by a scientist) were in 1584 – a good three centuries! With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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LONDON,

1919.

DEAR HUDSON,

Glad to get your letter and to know that you're living. I wish I could get into the open air and feel the wind and the rain on my face, for that's getting back to the earth and however much one gets subdued to a city one has a deep internal impatience of its conditions and the continuous hail of stimuli which worry one to death and give us all here at last a look of anxiety even in quiet times. And now of course times are not quiet and one wants to hear the sound of the waves and the song of the birds to make one believe they ever will be again, or at least to give one an anodyne. . . .

I'm quite sorry you are a little grieved that I don't take what you think the proper attitude towards what men call ghosts. The truth of the matter is that the whole

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business, whether founded on truth or not, has been so smudged and stained and made horrible by hideous stories of the imaginations of the writers like Machen and others that I feel one's mind gets fouled by having anything to do with it. I prefer to think of you sitting on an old tumulus, feeling in your mind the spiritual essence of past things, that spiritual essence which is really the gift, the very great gift, of your imagination of the past. That, to my mind, is the way we survive either individually for a short time or in the mass and historically for a long time in the minds of those who succeed us. I have no desire for immortality and still less for what I should believe the frail existence of myself as some thin material ghost which must be finally forgotten and die once more. If indeed we could be, as some think, happy ghosts that would be another matter, but I see no reason and certainly no proof that such a state could exist. You complain in a way of my taking the scientific attitude towards questions such as these. Well, I have always avoided so far as I could thinking about such questions. I find them, as Goethe and Gissing found speculative metaphysics, 'disturbing to the spirit,' and as I say, the whole thing has been made horrible by the literature which has grown up about the subject. I prefer either to take your old beautiful attitude, which is strictly spiritual, of those ancestors of ours who are dead and yet live in us and in the fertile earth that their descendants till, rather than speculate about their survival. And if that is so and one has to do work and use one's intellect on things which are still unknown, I have no objection to be one, though on the outside, of those patient workers we call men of science who build up bit by bit a

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web or pattern of knowledge endeavouring to make each part of the pattern correspond with the other parts, which correspondence is indeed proof so far as we can get proof. I do not expect them to make no mistakes or to be free, at any rate entirely free, from the common prejudices and weaknesses of mankind. Each one like a coral insect endeavours to build and the others try to pull it down. If it stays then he is a great man: if it fails he is but an unknown worker who did his best and by going the wrong way at any rate showed that it *was* the wrong way. Some of the greatest of all men have been such failures.

Well, this may have nothing to do with the subject, as indeed such considerations don't amount to much. If one's personally cross with their prejudice and foolishness, still there we are. I feel some forms of speculation are vain and that others are hopeful and after all, bit by bit, we see the idea of ghosts perish more and more. Our ancient beliefs are doomed always and ever and most of those who believe in survival at all do not strike one as believing in it for any other reason but that they desire to believe in it. That may not be true of all but it's certainly true of many, especially of those who investigate these questions with the aid of mediums who are mostly either deceitful or else intensely morbid in some way or another. If you think I've read nothing on the subject you're really wrong. I took the trouble for instance to go through the whole Proceedings of the Psychical Research Society, not without profit, perhaps, and not of course without some doubts, but finally with the feeling that the subject was better left alone even if one was quite convinced that a scientific explanation could be found at last. I do not say that every-

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one should leave it alone but I find it advisable for myself because I have deep in me an intensely morbid imagination and if I had chosen to give myself to writing horrible stories I firmly believe I should have surprised everybody in that most undesirable kind of writing. Better to live in the open air and even in the atmosphere of a laboratory than to dwell among ghosts and elementals.

It's quite true what you say of mesmerism. The phenomena of suggestion are as old as the hills and older than most and no doubt things were known about it before Mesmer lived. Still when I stated things arose from him I did so on the ground that he was the first great popular employer of what in a way is no doubt true. But when you abuse the scientific men for not accepting it you forget the purely empirical methods he adopted and what a charlatan he remained to the last with all his apparatus of mystery. There are still elements of charlatanism in the practice of medicine, but Mesmer's practice was that of a mountebank.

Well, there we are. I hope I haven't enraged you. As you say I'm an outsider in science and should try to take a comprehensive view. Well, that is what I do as far as I can. If I ever get anything done, which seems more and more unlikely, you will see I have taken as wide a view of all the developments of life as could be expected. But one can't be everything. If we could I'd have written your books too as well as my own. Better still, you might have written those of mine which are good and have relieved me of the task. All of us suffer from minor vices of some kind or another so after all what does it matter? We don't seem to have reached any conclusions, do we? but I hope you don't mind my speaking just as I feel: in

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fact I know you don't. I have inflicted all this on Naomi, who will presently type it out. Our love to you. Write to me whenever you can.

Yours ever,

M. R.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*March 2nd, 1919.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your letter came Friday morning just as I was starting off to the Land's End with two young girls to spend part of the day there. It was one of four fine days here and we all enjoyed it. My eyes begin to get tired of reading and writing all the time so I must go out more now the weather improves. On Wednesday the Hartleys came over and spent a couple of hours and took tea with me. He seems lamer than ever, poor chap, but they are well and working and send you their love. I hope to go over to St. Ives one day this week to see them.

Why do you keep bothering about ghosts? I have nothing to do with them, at all events in the present work I'm engaged on. I think of them not as you do, as a part of the superstitious fabric as souls, survivals, entities, but as phenomena quite as interesting as gravitation, telepathy, and the Aurora Borealis. You will find no ghosts in my work when you look at it, which I hope you will by and by. I don't mean on publication, as that is too far off. I mean when you are delivered of your own opus and are able to sit up and take a little chicken broth. Then if you will look at a few chapters, very short and typed, in plain and

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coloured Babu English and play the Cricket on the Hearth, I shall listen to your esteemed demi-quacks with the patience of a monument, as poet Shakespear says. By the way, you said in your letter before the last that men had had ghosts to deal with since the Miocene period. Was it a joke or is there any proof that man existed so far back? All the remains of *Homo sapiens* are referable to the Pleistocene period: the semi-human to the *later* Pliocene, but some 7 or 8 years ago it was announced from Buenos Ayres that evidence of man in the Miocene had been discovered in Patagonia. The bones of a Miocene beast had been found with a spear head buried in the solid bone and broken off at the top. The Palæontologists in England laughed at the notion of human beings in that period, and I don't know that anything further has come to light about it. I don't see everything that appears in the scientific journals. How the spear head of flint came to be in the bone is I suppose a mystery still.

Just now we have fine weather though it generally rains at night.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

DEAR ROBERTS,

March 4th (1919).

Sorry you are laid up again and with really nothing much the matter, as I imagine. Perhaps too much nicotine is poisoning you. Try to smoke a cigar (and smoke once in 4 or 5 hours) instead of a pipe. Only don't smoke

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without a mouth-piece. I am just about the same as usual – weak on my pins to walk, sleeping badly, aches and pains at night and so on and so forth. Doing very little. Dent talks now of deferring publication of my book of little sketches till the autumn – up till now he said he would put it out in spring. Dutton's manager, J. Macrae, is in London now and he and Dent are settling about my book – they will now have *Hampshire Days*, which I have got back from Longmans, and, I hope, *Nature in Downland* for which I am in treaty with Longman. The Ranee comes over at times to see me and has been bringing her guest Miss Ritchie with her. Miss R. is the daughter of the late Lady Richmond Ritchie and Thackeray's granddaughter. A rather fine woman – dark like a South American – and animated. . . . But I don't know her well. . . . She wanted my advice about a life and letters of her mother she is trying to write, but I declined to read it or advise. I told her I would find an expert reader to advise her, but she is afraid to trust anyone, and I imagine asks advice for the pleasure of not taking it.

With love to you both,

Yours,

W. H. H.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

March 19th, 1919.

No, I don't know anything about it, and when I see it I shall believe. The only colour preference I've observed in sparrows is for yellow. They destroy the yellow

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crocuses first, paying no attention to the white and purple till there are no yellow left. No doubt they eat the inside of the flowers after pulling the petals off — but the fact remains that they go first for the yellow. Then in London I've noticed that they will strip the laburnums but not to eat the flowers — they pull them or cut them off — whole stems, and sometimes use the twigs in building, or just scatter them about. But they take no notice of the lilac, which would attract them first if they had a passion for blue. As to processional caterpillars we don't have them in England, but any one who has ever read an entomological book knows all about them, just as he knows about harvesting ants which we haven't got. In old pre-natural-history-knowledge days of Solomon's 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard,' etc., it used to be said that it was one of the many fables in Scripture. Then Moggeridge arose — a mighty observer who went to the Riviera for his health and as a hobby studied the ways of ants native to that part, and lo and behold! they did just as Solomon says. That's an old book of his. Now from Cook's observations in America we know that ants not only harvest the seed good for them, but cultivate the plants that bear it.<sup>1</sup> So do we know that

<sup>1</sup> The view that certain ants actually cultivate plants which bear seed useful to them is now, I believe, discredited. That in some cases seeds dropped about the nest germinate and grow appears to be an accident, such as might occur in the neighbourhood of any granary built by man. I do not know what authority Hudson had for saying the leaf-cutting ants (*Cecidoma*) pulp the leaves they carry to their nests. According to Belt (*A Naturalist in Nicaragua*) they merely subdivide the pieces of leaf on which the fungus food grows. As these ants are not found south of Central America and tropical South America Hudson had no opportunity of observing them himself.

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the leaf-cutting ants of all S. and Cent. America grow their own vegetable food, using the millions of leaves they carry into their nests not as food but to be *pulped* and spread out in beds on which they grow the funguses on which they subsist.

I can't imagine why you can't find a more taking title for your book. It seems heavy. Why not Internal Warfare and a sub-title to explain the title? Internecine Wars would be better than *Warfare in the Human Body*. One is reminded of Indigestion and wind, etc., etc.

Dr. Miller here told me to-day that his old friend Pardoe has given up practice on account of a shooting accident he had some time ago. I wonder if his retirement is permanent or only till he gets well again. The weather continues good and almost summer-like. I find my winter clothing is getting oppressive.

Among my letters yesterday there were two from California — one from an old lady about *Green Mansions*, the other from a child about *A Little Boy Lost*. And one from Buenos Ayres about *Far Away*, etc. from a fellow I knew as a boy. He was one of six, they were rich people, and they used to visit us — three or four of them at a time, riding from their place about 8 miles from our house. We were friendly enough but looked on them as Philistine — people of means who took no interest in things of the mind, but only in dollars.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
March 27th (1919).

DEAR ROBERTS,

I had your letter a day or two ago. I've dropped my own work now as I have to do the proofs of the Nat. Hist. book which they send in galley, so shall have to go twice over it and to make an index too. I also hear that the old book *Birds in a Village*, which I re-wrote, is being printed, so that will have to be done. All this may keep me well into May and I needn't hurry back as the lady who has my flat is going to stay on until June 1st.

I find nothing in your letter which calls for a reply. Talking of ghosts I have lately seen a good deal of *two* clergymen here, one a Rev. Ch. Hall, from Paisley where he is a Swedenborgian minister. I was familiar with his name as author of many small books of Natural History, and Editor of others. Botany is his favourite subject and he is a thorough evolutionist. But the chief interest was in the story of his life which he gave me; how as a boy of 17 he went to Canada and being left without money rambled about the Ontario country doing odd jobs. Then he found a home and situation in a vicarage, and the old parson tho' an excellent man was given to drink and one Sunday was too drunk to take the morning service. The parson's wife distractedly threw herself on the boy Hall's mercy and implored him to take the service! It was unlawful but he was at last prevailed on and actually went into the pulpit and preached a sermon and conducted the whole service! By and bye the Bishop of Ontario came

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

along on a visitation and was so delighted with what he heard about young Hall who had saved the situation when the Vicar was *too ill* to appear that he sent him off to Ontario to glance over 2 or 3 books of theology and then be ordained. When the day of ordination came and he declared his age 18 they laughed and told him to come up again when 23. After other adventures he came home and became a Swedenborgian and was ordained by them. In spite of religion he's a fine fellow and told me of two big fights he had had. The other clergyman is a curate of St. Erth's, whose first years were spent in the Civil Service in British Guiana and who made expeditions into the interior. He gave up his post to get into the church and when he came to St. Erth there was no home for him and his wife, except a haunted house which no one could live in and is let for almost nothing. He took it gladly as he feared no ghosts, but he and his wife have now both seen the ghosts many times and are pleased to live with them on account of the small rent. I must, I find, get another piece of paper to finish.

P.S. Our weather begins to improve now and I hope to get about a little more and visit the Hartleys and Zennor, Land's End and St. Burian's with other places where people I know live.

Perhaps you would be interested in a mild way in this lecture. At all events his portrait is worth looking at:<sup>1</sup> what a fine old Dutch face it is to be sure! I venture to say in my reply to him that Bateson has gone just as far as Davenport and that these gentlemen have landed Mendelism in an absurd position: that it is similar to the notion of

<sup>1</sup> Portrait of De Vries.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

the old theologists of 40 or 50 years ago, when they were driven to accept Evolution: the notion that the first lower organisms were created and contained in germ all the infinitely diversified forms of life which were in due time to appear 'according to plan.' If theologists still cling to that notion they will find in the pronouncements of the leader of the Mendelians a fresh instance of 'Science coming to the aid of revolted Religion.'

*P.S.* Thursday. Your letter just received: oh, yes, quite legible, but why do you strain your sight writing that microscopic hand? Note that everything you say in the ghost matter is just what the scientists went on saying for 3 centuries about hypnotism — on delusions, trickery, and against the laws of evolution and nature and so on. So that's that.

My old landlady has just promised to give me half a pound of butter this afternoon when her farmer who provides these things comes in. It is market day to-day. And if I get it I'll post it to Naomi in place of the violets I promised. There are no violets now at Lelant. I went there and to make sure walked out to the violet field: it was flowerless and they say the incessant flooding rains of the last two months have prevented the blooms from blooming. I daresay they will bloom now the weather is beginning to improve a little.

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23 NORTH PARADE,

*April 6th, 1919.*

I came to-day on the two enclosed pars — in *Tit-Bits*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

and the *D.T.* I wonder if your dyer's yarn and this paper-printing one are variants of the same story? It happened that it was washing day in the house to-day, and seeing some extensive blue things spread on (*sic*) the garments and clothes spread on the bushes to dry I watched and though the place teems with sparrows (I feed a lot of them) not one came to the things. One must wait for further observations before accepting these yarns as true. The other cutting is from the 'Autobiography of a Machine' running in the paper just now, and this paragraph, in strong contrast to the rest, makes one think that a gush of wild undefined human emotion swept the machine off its wheels and springs and pulleys. Don't throw the blue cutting away, as one must keep the thing in mind. I'm just as usual and do very little. No proof has come to me from you so far. I continue to get many letters from the U.S.A. — several from California the last few days. . . . I've just been this evening to see that famous Drury Lane 'Sporting Life' drama: but found it poor stuff. Just lately we've had two of Zane Grey's cinematized books here — *The Riders of the Sage* and a sequel, but I can't stand that frontier revolver stuff any longer. He, Zane Grey, sent me a big book describing his fishing adventures in the G. of Mexico and the Pacific — a gorgeous volume *de luxe*. He says he admires my books and I'm sorry his don't appeal to me. He is as popular in the U.S. as Charles Garvice was in England, but from a literary point of view he is much above C. G. By the bye what a quarrel is raging in several papers over C. G. — poor dead man! Arnold Bennett might just as well have held his tongue — or pen, but the scribbling

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

itch is too strong for him. Well, I hope you are all right again.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

The beginning of this letter refers to some statements that sparrows show a great preference for blue things.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

June 11th, 1919.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your two p.c.'s received. You appear to have got on to an unsavoury subject with your friend. A rook is quite capable of eating dead lamb, but he doesn't like putrid carrion, though in seasons of scarcity he will even take to that. On the coast you see him in company with the carrion crow feeding on dead fish thrown up by the waves. And in winter when there is frost so that he can't dig up grubs he will breakfast on cow-dung though not cheerfully. After a mouthful or two he will turn round and *cow-cow* as if abusing mother nature for compelling him to consume such loathsome fare. A friend of mine in Northumberland (Alnwick) had a horse die, and to skin it he had it hauled up on to a horizontal branch of a tree, suspended by the hind legs. After skinning it he left it hanging and by and by rooks came to feast on it. There was a huge rookery there on the Duke's place at Alnwick and he says hundreds, perhaps a thousand birds, came until the whole tree was black with them and the carcase of the

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

horse was hidden by them as they crowded on it and for two or three days they kept at it until nothing but the cleaned skeleton was left.

I'm glad you are enjoying yourself in your own way and wish I was there. I'm going to Worthing on Friday for the week end but return on Tuesday next week.

With love to both if Naomi is there too.

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE, W.,

*June 16th (1919).*

Yes, I'm back, and wish I was there too – but instead of a p.c. you might have sent a letter enclosing a whiff of the freshness of Exmoor and the Barle seeing that such a thing can be conveyed – in a sense – by words. I've been trying to get through with various matters before going to Worthing and was to have gone down this morning, but after a sleepless night I feel unfit even to go to Victoria station to-day so must leave it till to-morrow. I shall be lodging for a week or so at No. 8 Bedford Row, Worthing: then come back for a week or so here.

Rothenstein wanted to include my portrait in a book of 25 Allen and Unwin are going to issue by and by, so I've been three times of a morning to sit to him and each time he has done a portrait – all unsatisfactory. He has bought a fine big house on Campden Hill so he is close by here. On two mornings I met there Rabindranath Tagore, and renewed the acquaintance of years ago when he first came

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

to England. He is the finest specimen of an Indian gentleman I have ever met, and has a wonderful charm in his manner. But yesterday I met exactly his opposite — a young English adventurer, who during the war joined the Arabs in Syria and although a civilian was made a commander of a force by them and fought against the Turks. Then, the War Office getting wind of his daring sent him a commission, etc., and he was Colonel Lawrence for the rest of the war, then went and joined Allenby in Palestine. I found him arrayed in the most beautiful male dress of the East I have ever seen — a reddish camel-hair mantle or cloak with gold collar over a white gown reaching to the ground, and a white headpiece with 3 silver cords or ropes wound round it. As he is clean-shaven and has a finely sculptured face the dress was most effective. He said it is worn only in Mecca by persons of importance, and nowhere but at Mecca. He is a worshipper of Doughty, and also told me he had read *The Purple Land* 12 times. While W. R. worked on my portrait I had a grand talk with Col. L. in his remarkable dress and we argued furiously about Science versus Art. But though he was all for art he had a keenly observant mind and could put one into the East and its atmosphere better than any book I know — except Doughty perhaps.

I suppose W. R. came into money when his father died a year or so ago, which may explain why he has so expensive an establishment. It struck me that *The Purple Land* was just the sort of book that would appeal to a young adventurer like Lawrence — a sort of Richard Lamb himself. With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE, ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

*July 21st (1919).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your experiment means just nothing more than what it is. What your implication is I don't know. Probably that life is a mode of motion or that we are composed of so many ounces of water and salt, carbons and so on, and that's all there is about it. And if any person asks you how you (a handful of ashes) know anything about it, you can reply that you have already discovered and told them the secret of the universe and they mustn't ask more questions, mustn't worry their ashes about it! I'm reminded of Ray Lankester and *his* last pronouncement. He's now trying to hedge about telepathy, the very man who threw his 25 stone weight on Samuel Butler to crush him — and in fact *did* succeed for 10 or 15 or 20 years, since the scientists as a body followed Lankester who first proclaimed that Butler was an 'ignorant outsider,' a most presumptuous one, too, who dared to criticize an explanation of the origin of the species which all scientific men had accepted. Very well, that's exactly the tone he adopted from the first about Telepathy — they were not only ignorant outsiders who believed in it but congenital idiots. A few weeks ago Lord Rayleigh in his speech on the progress of science said that as to telepathy all the leading scientists still maintained that it was impossible. And now comes the voice of Sir E. Ray bellowing that he does not deny the existence of telepathy, but only that it has not been proved to his satisfaction. Is not his attitude on

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Darwinism and telepathy and many other different subjects — and his attitude is that of all the professional scientists — the attitude of the priest towards freedom of thought? You don't seem to know that Butler has come into his own and that he has influenced thought more than any other writer of the last half of the 19th century. And also that the scientists, who have been so much influenced by him, cheerfully conceal the facts. There may be a few exceptions: by implication Sir F. Darwin says or almost says that he is a Butlerian.

I wish you would read Butler. You couldn't help admiring his acute reasoning and splendid independence. Ray Lankester didn't crush him.

Yours w. h. h.

No Notes received.

P.S. — I have just been reading Butler's *Evolution, Old and New*, and am delighted with it on account of the long quotes from *Zoonomia*. I read some of that wonderful book in S. America but nothing since till now. Of course his principal subject is Lamarck, and when he comes to that pathetic part of the great naturalist's story, when he is old and poor and his sight failing, and is still producing great books, Butler misses telling one thoroughly pathetic incident, the way in which Lamarck in his old age was treated by Napoleon. It is in Arago's autobiography which I bought only a short time ago in an old volume of the *Traveller's Library*. I will quote the passage in case you don't know it. 'When the Emperor returned from Mass he had a kind of review of these savants, the artists, these literary men in green uniforms.' The spectacle did

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

not edify young Arago. The Emperor twitted him with his youth and passed on to the next. "This one was not a novice but a naturalist well known through his beautiful and important discoveries. It was M. Lamarck. The old man presented a book to Napoleon. "What is that?" said the latter, "is it your absurd meteorology, in which you rival M. Saensburg? It is this *annuaire* which dishonours your old age. Do something in Natural History and I should receive your production with pleasure. As to this volume I take it in consideration of your white hairs." And he passed the book to an aide-de-camp. Poor M. Lamarck who, at the end of each sharp insulting sentence of the Emperor, tried in vain to say, "It is a work of Natural History which I present to you," was weak enough to fall into tears.'

You see that Napoleon knew the academic mind of that day about Lamarck and simply voiced the scorn and contempt of the professorial class on a man who had the courage to call his soul his own. Napoleon was after all very much like the Kaiser of to-day.

With love to you both,

W. H. HUDSON.

Lamarck, who took a great interest in meteorology, then at a very low stage, at which, indeed, it remained till the time of Buys-Ballot, published from 1800 to 1810 many volumes entitled *Annuaires Meteorologiques*. These were discontinued after the incident related by Arago, who is chiefly remembered for his studies in optics and magnetism, in which latter subject he was the forerunner of Faraday.

Hudson's admiration for Samuel Butler, chiefly founded

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

on Butler's intense dislike of anything in the shape of orthodoxy in science, blinded him not a little to the fact that while Butler's criticism was often sound, his constructive views on unconscious memory in evolution were nothing but words after all. With some doubt I have left untouched Hudson's interesting abuse of Sir Ray Lankester, which was often modified in conversation, and became mere chaff, since he was not, and could not be, ignorant of the work done by that eminent zoologist. Hudson was obviously a confirmed Neo-Lamarckian, as most eminent open-air naturalists tend to become in time, and he was (as will be seen) indignant with me for saying doubtfully that 'I supposed I was a kind of Lamarckian.' But we may suppose Lamarck to have been nearer the truth than Darwin without swallowing with a gulp the older theory of the transmission of acquired characteristics. When this theory is modified by modern knowledge of hormones the implied inheritance is that of a potentiality rather than of an actual character. In his later days Hudson began, I think, to come round to this view although he steadily refused to study these matters for himself. He had, as he thought, and as all may well think, other work to do.

*Zoonomia* was, of course, the book written by Erasmus Darwin.

The experiment referred to in the beginning of the letter is one devised by Rhumbler. If a small piece of clean glass is pushed against a drop of chloroform under water it will not enter the drop, but if the glass be coated with shellac it is drawn into the chloroform and held there till the shellac is dissolved, when it is thrown out. The

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

implications of this experiment are that many so-called vital actions of protoplasm are obviously mechanistic and physical when analysed. Hudson, for all his freedom of mind, seemed to object to the natural view that continued analysis would show that mind, or cerebral reactions, however fine, or obscure, must in the end conform to physical laws.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

September 5th (1919).

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have just come back from Worthing where I've been staying about a fortnight, doing very little work as I'm pretty well always feeling unwell. And I want badly to go for a short visit to Haslemere to see a Mr. Dolmitch who lives there. I have a letter of introduction to him from Masefield. And so I can't promise to lunch next Tuesday because I don't know where I shall be — here or at Haslemere where I may stay a night or two. I must leave it till next week and then let you know. Just now I go on most days to lunch at Owens' only because it is a little nearer than Whiteley's: when I am not fatigued after my morning's work I go to W's. I have only done three more chapters of the Hind in Richmond Park scribble: but I've had the proofs of my old *Birds in a Village* which I rewrote and added a lot to and have finished them. I believe both books are coming out in October. I've just had to send some photographs to Hodder and Stoughton for the next *Bookman*. I wonder

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

if you've read all Leonard Merrick? I had never read a book of his but at Worthing I took up one and having read it went on and read the other six as I really like them enormously in spite of the little limited world he treats of — the world of the theatre principally, which interests me less than most things.

Somehow somewhere somewhen next week I hope to see you.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*November 21st, 1919.*

You see the date of this paper which I have just unearthed. Well, I read it 20 odd years ago and was astonished that a man of learning and a writer of genius like Carpenter should have given this confession to the public, describing states of mind in himself as unprecedented and inexplicable, when they are just such states as mystics have been describing for hundreds of years. A little knowledge of psychology would, I think, have made him a little shy of putting himself forward as a seer and a prophet and one receiving his inspiration from outside, presumably from the Heavenly Powers whose seats are in the blue sky. I only knew Vignoli at that date, but these mysteries of the subconscious have been treated by many since that date.

When you have read it *please return.*

I lunched with Lady Glenconner and Lord Grey and Prof. Mackail on Friday and found on meeting the last-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

named that we would have nothing to say to each other: then I luckily remembered that last May, in Penzance, I had read the whole of his long life of Morris, so I mentioned that and we then talked about Morris.

Poor Grey, how I pity him in a darkened world when he wants to see so much. He feels it most in London. In the country, especially in the places he knows, the scenery in all its colours, according to the time of year, reproduces itself on his mind so that practically he can *see it*, and so every sound, every bird voice, enables him to see the thing itself.

I don't know yet how I shall be to go out this week as my cold got worse, and I have to go to Dent's on Tuesday.

Yours with love,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

November 29th, 1919.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Your two postcards have arrived simultaneously, at one and the same time, both together, and I'm told you are going to visit these parts in December. The cold half killed me in London and it was cold in Exeter when I had a week there; but it changed then to wet and has been beautifully mild ever since. Have you seen *Butler's Life* yet? Of course it is deeply interesting as S. B. was an original man and such are not as plentiful as blackberries. But Festing Jones his friend and biographer is not what some reviewers have called him — a second Boswell. Far

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far from it: Bozzy was everything his detractors have been saying these hundred years past — wine-bibber, toady, parasite, inordinately vain, ridiculous and what not — see Macaulay for the rest, but when he wrote his book he was above the ruck of biographers — far up in the angelic regions. He was never tedious, never puerile, never at fault in the divine gift of selection and *never vulgar*. These seem to me the blots on a big book which I'm now reading. And (to change the subject) what say you now of the ethereal medium? Has Sir O. L. had his occupation taken from him? He could demonstrate its existence: the universe was unthinkable as a going concern without it. Not only was it matter and the very stuff of which matter came but it was the link between the material and spiritual worlds since it formed the substance in which the soul was housed and the means of communication between the dead and the living. Is he then going to take its loss lying down? That appears to be his decision in his last pronouncement when he says that the tremendous consequences of this new view of things must be left to the coming generation to consider and work out.<sup>1</sup>

I'm not particularly well and not doing much — very little in fact. I am glad your show proved a success. I wonder if Graham went to see it? I saw him at his mother's after leaving you and he said he would go round and look at the pictures.

With love to you both  
Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> This passage of course relates to Professor Einstein's work on Relativity and the temporary hypothesis of the ether.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 28th, 1919.*

Yes, quite legible *this time* — probably more so than I shall ever be. It shows what you can do when you have the mind. That judgment of Gissing is brief — and brilliant — you couldn't have said more in half a dozen columns. Gissing himself, I believe, would have appreciated it as a true — the truest estimate of his genius. I agree with Naomi about Chesterfield — she cannot admire him more than I do. His letters in a very old 17th century edition was one of the strange books in our collection on the pampas when I was a boy: it was one of the first serious books I read and I have not outlived my esteem for it, in spite of the quarrel we all have with him in reference to the Dr. Johnson business. As to Landor, anyone who loves literature must come in time to think very highly of him. He is very great — but, taking literature in the sense in which we consider, say, sport, clothing, cookery and so on, it is not the greatest. Read a scene in Shakespear, a chapter of Tolstoi, and then the best dialogue in *Imaginary Conversations* and you remark the vast difference — the hot passionate palpitating world we exist in and the beautiful motionless picture of life, beautifully framed, varnished, and hanging on the wall. For the rest — I'm inclined to hope Naomi will never be a Peacockian. I admire certain things — but they are always the things I admire, and, thank God, I'm not what you call catholic in my tastes. I've just finished the whole huge Butler biography and it has sent me back to his books. What a pity we didn't meet

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

him when we were at Shoreham and he was coming there often, when Gogin was painting his portrait. For some reason the biographer Festing Jones, who diligently goes out of his way in his memoir to say every nasty thing about people — mainly those Butler disliked — says not a word about a quarrel between Butler and Gogin. It was, I believe, about a lady. . . . Just now I'm reading S. B.'s *Sonnets of Shakespear*, and whether his theory is true, or wholly true, or not, it is to my mind the best exposition I have seen and has cleared my mind of the confounded tantalizing mystery of the Sonnets and the Mr. W. H. one has come to detest before knowing anything about Butler's notion. Then too his Ulysses — but Lord, what a many-sided mind he had! Rain, rain, rain here every day and all day long, so tho' always unwell, I must stay indoors and do a little writing each day.

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LONDON, 1919.

MY DEAR HUDSON,

In spite of the rain — I condole with you on that, though we must be as wet in London — you seem to write rather more cheerfully than you did. Perhaps it was my legibility. Certainly I tried to be legible that time, but in your letter there are two or three words that Naomi and I have not made out yet — that's for you. I'm pleased to think you liked the note on Gissing. . . . It rather amuses me to think you like Chesterfield. At first I seemed to feel it unnatural that *you* should, but on reflection I see how

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you might. Possibly your admiration of him is partly, as it were, historical because you read him as a boy. Personally I think him on the whole rather ignoble, though Naomi fights me on that: at any rate there seem few passages where he appears moved by a generous or really disinterested passion or feeling. As to Landor I don't care much about your half-dislike of his beautiful motionless pictures of life, and that's not only because I do not find as much in Shakespear as you do, or in Tolstoi, though some of Tolstoi, especially *Ivan Ilyich*, I think great masterpieces, for Landor's work is to me the nearest to actual sculpture to be found in literature. And yet such things as the *Aesop and Rhodope* or the *Epicurus, Leontion and Ternissa* are as full of life, though in a different way, as the most living things in Theocritus. Still the man is static and a sculptor and I suppose that is why he does not succeed in drama. As to Peacock, well, I take him down several times a month and revel in his savage attacks on everybody. The truth is, I agree with three quarters of what he says, for I find in him the revolutionary element I mostly look for in books. After all, isn't that why I like Landor so much? He was a revolutionary to the last, just as old Meredith was. It isn't often I am so quiet in mind as to be able to take draughts of pure literature without 'tendency.' You see there is really a big deep swift-running stream of tendency in your own work. . . . Anyway you must let me admire Peacock and try to make Naomi like him, though it seems a hard job. So you've finished Jones's Butler, have you? I congratulate you on your courage. Two more heavy stones on the grave of a notable man. I should like to take the book as material

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

and do 60,000 words out of it. Jones, though he was a friend of Butler, is no Boswell. As to Butler, well, much as I admire a great deal of his work, especially the two *Erewhons* and the *Way of all Flesh* . . . his pettishness and savagery at not being greeted with applause by absolutely everyone whom he does not agree with are really not only comic but childish. Personally I don't see he did anything in science except indeed turning you back to Lamarck, so there you are. I don't really know your own opinion.

Of course I remember old Gogin very well and how you and I went to the studio in Suter's boat building yard. . . . I don't quite know whether I wish we had met S. B. or not, for I am firmly convinced that if we had met often we should have parted after a jolly good row. Old H. G. Sutton used to say in his clumsy fashion, 'Too much indoor proceedings are not good for us. We know everything.' Well, B. lived indoors with himself and a few symbiotes, or parasites, if you will, or semi-parasitic commensals, who were overwhelmed by him or afraid to disagree with him. That's bad for a man, especially a comparatively young man. As they say in the city B. was a 'bull of himself' and got angry because others didn't say he was very great. A man of that type is, however, a destined solitary. Of course he did good work but I don't like him. I imagine he would have fought as savagely for his own particular brand of obscure theism as any orthodox theologian for the three in one. Well, that's all about B. I don't know anything about the *Sonnets of Shakespear* and don't intend to strain my mind on the subject unless the book happens to stumble into my hands. You know I feel about Shake-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

spear as the historical Greek did about Aristides. As he himself remarked, 'There are livers out of Britain.'

I've been tolerably seedy again but working hard at the scientific book. . . . This week, or early next, I hope to finish the paper on cannibalism. Most of the rest is nearly done, or at any rate so roughed out that I can finish it quickly. When are we to see the *Field Naturalist*? Oh, of course, you spoke of B.'s manysidedness. Certainly he had the type of mind, perhaps the barrister's type, which can pick up, more or less satisfactorily, a great number of subjects. My own opinion is that if he hadn't been vain and had been properly trained and kept on more or less one line he might have done most magnificent work. Certainly he ought to have done it. Well, there you are. This at any rate is going to be legible when Naomi has deciphered it from shorthand and you get it in typescript. In fact you may consider this a kind of joint letter as she is so very much pleased you remember Chesterfield so kindly. With love from both of us and all good wishes for the New Year, including less rain at Penzance.

Yours affectionately,

M. R.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

January 2nd, 1920.

. . . And just a word about Butler. I agree and disagree as I do with every review of F. J.'s book. You are all right about B. — his vanity, offensiveness, and so on:

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

and all wrong on the main points – the man's real character under that somewhat repellent mask and the significance of the work. You of all men to scoff at amateurs! You with the academic mind (with regard not to yourself but others)! Minimize what Butler did as much as you like, it was he and not Herbert Spencer or any one else who smashed the Darwin idol and finally compelled the angels of science to creep cautiously in where the jeered fool had rushed – and led the way. Darwin's glory is that he compelled the world to listen to the doctrine of transition – Butler's that he brought the Darwin cult to an end. Mendelism was not known when he wrote *Life and Habit*, and H. Spencer's criticism of Darwin was universally disregarded – when it was Spencer and not Darwin who was the real apostle of evolution. But I'm not writing a letter and so can't explain it to you. What I really had to say was something I forgot when I wrote: you asked me when my 'book' was 'coming out'! I have no book to come out and never hinted at such a thing. I was writing one as you knew: you saw the first 7 chapters and I went on to 12. Then no more and I've not touched it since I came. What I did runs to about 50,000 and would make half a book. I don't suppose it will ever be finished. I'm trying to do something else now.

With love to you both and all good wishes,

W. H. H.

The 'book' was *A Hind in Richmond Park*. As in the case of other books in the later times of his life, Hudson thought he would never finish it and in this case he proved right. His statement that Samuel Butler 'brought the

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Darwin cult to an end' can easily be misinterpreted. Hudson yielded to none in his admiration for Darwin and was far from approving Butler's ill-mannered attack on a very great man. But as Hudson was by nature, as it were, a Lamarckian, he had much sympathy with Butler when he was in conflict with pure orthodoxy. Hudson had himself come into fairly rough contact with Darwinian purists, themselves the victims of their environment, though they knew it not, and he, too, resented, though without any bitterness such as Butler displayed, their occasional lofty air of complete knowledge as to how organic modification came about. Butler's weakness as an amateur lay not so much in the fact that he was not trained in biological science as in his general attitude of mind towards those who differed from him. He attacked all his problems with the grim conviction that he was wholly right and every one else wholly wrong. He was an advocate who could always 'abuse the plaintiff's attorney' and do it well, but his native lack of delicacy never permitted him to recognize that insolence to a much older man, even if he were wrong, was utterly unpardonable.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*February 28th, 1920.*

Yes, thank you, quite legible. *The Observer* is my Sunday paper so of course I read Keith's review of Prof. Keane — poor old fellow with his pension of £50 — when Austin Dobson, a comparatively rich man, got £200 and

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

will probably go on enjoying it for 20 years longer as well as the pension from the India Office. That's the 'differ' between writing the A. D. Ballades and 18th century stuff about Miss Burney, the author of *Evelina*, and the man who spent his life working hard at things that matter. Keith's article is very good and it had the other incidental interest for me, that he spoke with sympathy of poor Keane and the way he was neglected by the Government and everybody. I had a great regard for him. When my very first book came out<sup>1</sup> and *The Saturday Review* and *Athenæum* jumped on it as a farrago of indecent nonsense and lies, Keane wrote a glowingly favourable review in *The Academy*. The first taste of praise I ever had. It was anonymous but we got into correspondence and one day when I dined with him at his house he told me about his own life and work and made a proposal. He said that in his young days he had gone about a good deal and had met with some curious and interesting adventures, and with queer people, and this past life was so good a subject for treatment as a romantic tale that he had tried and tried to do it and had not succeeded because he lacked the creative imagination to put in what it wanted — to connect the stories of true things together. And when he read *The Purple Land* he said, 'That's the book I've been trying so long to write and can't do it!' Then he proposed that I should take all he had written and all his notes and journals and make a book of adventure of a young fellow of an adventurous temper and do it just as I liked and invent what I liked and so on. I declined the job for the reason that it would be impossible for me to get the atmo-

<sup>1</sup> *The Purple Land*, 1885.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

sphere seeing that the places, scenes, people were all unknown to me: and that if I were to write it it would read to him much as *The Purple Land* would to me if he had written that book after getting the facts from me. And so at last he died and his romance is buried with him. Whether that son of his who wrote *Spindrift* is alive or not I don't know — I forget.

Now here's a queer thing. I have just had a letter from — from Vancouver, as long as a book or at any rate as a long chapter in a book, and I wish I hadn't. We were great friends until my book on the Land's End came out and then he dropped me like a hot potato but let me know by writing to a friend of mine that he was unspeakably disgusted at my bringing out a book on the Land's End in which I pretended to give an account of the Cornish character, about which I could know nothing, while he after 13 years living among the Cornish people was just beginning to find out what they really were. From the first he told me that he had been collecting material for a book on Land's End for 13 years, and only when I urged him to start on it before he got smothered in his material or died of old age, he set about writing the first chapter — and never got beyond it. Now (without a word of apology or explanation for his past conduct) he writes me this infernally long epistle in a flattering tone telling me how much my last book is thought of in Vancouver and so on — and all because he wants a testimonial from me to the Canadian Government about his suitability for a permit to collect the specimens he requires for a book he is writing! They tell him he can't have the permit unless he can get this testimonial from two well-known English

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

ornithologists as he does not know the Americans. He is doing again out there what he did in Cornwall and it will end the same way, I suppose. But he says he is working in a new way – the way I taught him, for which he is deeply grateful! I taught him, he tells me, not to take notes unless about things that were worth it! His notes at the Land's End could fill a dozen big volumes, I fancy, and when he came to work with them they bewildered and overwhelmed him. I haven't seen the Hartleys again – I haven't been out of Penzance. I'm a bit better than when I wrote last and able to do some scribbling.

With love to both,  
Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

Professor Keane's son was J. F. Keane, who wrote *Six Months in Mecca*, *On Blue Water*, and *Three Years of a Wanderer's Life*, all very good books in their way. He was a typical English seaman, and when I met him in the office of my friend Edmund Downey we went away together and 'gammed' in the nearest place, after the manner of two possible members of the Lost Legion.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*March 8th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am glad you have got such a splendid introduction. Doubtless the book<sup>1</sup> would have made its way and made

<sup>1</sup> *Warfare in the Human Body.*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

it on its merits: but such praise from Prof. Keith will give it a quick success. I like the last page best – ‘In M. R. we have a visitor of a new kind,’ etc., etc. – that is nobly expressed. The one important criticism to be made on his answer to the question ‘How is it possible, etc., etc.’ Then ‘The explanation is not far to seek’ – ‘as a writer of true fiction it was his business to seek it, etc.’ It was not your business, whether your fiction was true or not true. To put it as an Irishman might, if the graver writers of *true fiction* – Hardy and Tolstoy let’s say – had concerned themselves with these problems of science they would not have been the great fictionists they are. You can’t grow potatoes and daffodils in the same field – or grapes and apples in the same orchard if you prefer that. Everyone will agree that imagination is a very great thing in science – Tyndall maintained that no great advance could be made without it, but the comparison he starts with, leading up to that subject, I am in disagreement with, but it would take me a whole page to explain why so I’ll leave that alone – unless you particularly want to know. I’m returning the Introduction at once with congrats.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*March 12th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

It is rather exasperating – the way you write on a post-card and bring in all sorts of recondite and controversial

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

subjects with a sentence of 3 or 4 words — What about Goethe? and so on. Yet I suppose you can clear your own mind concerning such questions as easily as another. About fiction and science and imagination — Artistic creation is not the whole function of this the highest faculty we have: I believe, with Tyndall, that it is essential in science — that observing, experimenting, accumulating facts would lead to little or nothing without the faculty that is like intuition, or prophetic, which leaps forward to great generalization. But imagination in art has a different business and the truth *he* or it goes in for in that field is not the same sort of thing as scientific truth. Science and Art to my thinking are mutually exclusive: and novels may be or not be art or science pure and simple but a sort of oil and water mixture. Your Thomas Waring, for example, and Masefield's novel about Sleeping-sickness are not exactly works of art, but rather semi-pathological treatises, with a story about people's domestic affairs and emotions thrown in to make it a novel. 'What about Goethe?' and you might add What about Leonardo da Vinci? also a few other geniuses. Well, they had the great faculty in both forms — and didn't fuse it and put it in one mould.

Your scanty postcard doesn't say which of the two paragraphs you mean when you say one is being recast by Keith. I will assume that it is the one referring to a writer of true fiction finding it necessary to go into a study of physiology and every other science dealing with the human organism.

The other paragraph I am not in agreement with can't be altered, I fancy, and had better be left as it is. It is the explanation he gives of the fact that whereas he loses himself in the streets of London, familiar to him, a perfect

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

stranger to London succeeds in finding his way (in a fog) *because* of his imagination. If you will inquire of the people you know you will find it is not so — that imagination has nothing to do with finding your way in London streets or in a dark wood or anywhere. Take my case: I have some imagination, but can no more find my way in the most familiar streets in a fog than I can float in the air or walk on water or balance an eel on my nose. *Because my sense of direction is defective.* And many's the time I've been in a fog with some one who was not of the place and had him for my guide, and he has wondered how I could make east west and north south unless I had something wrong with my miserable brain. Your imaginative man in a fog is something like the astronomer who walks with his eyes starward and falls in a ditch. However in our state of civilization the sense of direction is not remembered or considered, as it is well-nigh obsolescent compared to that of men who live in natural conditions: and the paragraph about his friend's imagination and its helpfulness serves well enough to introduce the subject of the paper. That's all. Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

Alas! I can't touch my Hind in Richmond Park book yet owing to having taken up the story I'm writing now, and I'm sorely in want of your opinion on it when finished — a short story but rather longer than the usual s.s. By that time you will be free of this work and able I hope to give it a look.

Perhaps it may be noted that Hudson, who was rigid in his belief in a 'sense' of direction, whatever the word

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

'sense' may mean in this connection, had not had any very great or prolonged experience in finding his own way in countries where it is very easy to get lost. On an open plain or pampa one rarely gets disoriented, since the sun or moon or stars or the prevailing winds prevent that from happening. But in a cloudy hill country or one that is thickly wooded, to go astray is easy. To say that those who do not often err in this way are endowed with a sense of direction is to beg the question. After considerable experience of such conditions I have come to the conclusion, backed, I believe, by most travellers, that observation, conscious or unconscious, is sufficient to account for all cases in which a 'sense of direction' is asked for by those who have not this faculty of observation. We cannot easily escape from the atrophy of our powers due to prolonged life in cities in civilization, where there are names and signs and people to tell us the way, and therefore the power of some whom we call savages, or the like, to recognize direction seems marvellous to us. That such people 'just know' and cannot explain goes for nothing, since they are not accustomed to analyse their own methods. I have seen a man in a big English wood unable to tell north from south when the moss on the tree trunks, or its thinner growth, shouted the facts at him, Yet did not Melchior Anderegg (I think it was he) take his 'herr' from the far east of London to the west after going over the complex of streets only once? Those who have seen guides come down a snowfield and a glacier in thick weather will scarcely doubt that experience and observation are the real foundation of their skill in direction.

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The story referred to in the postscript of this letter was *Dead Man's Plack*, then in progress.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*April 26th (1920).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I had your p.c. two or three days ago but have nothing to tell. 'What about your book?' you ask, and still the answer is nothing. I can't get on with anything owing to wretched health. The same weakness as before and but for that quite well. The trouble is the heart worry causes insomnia and that unfits me for writing. My wife has been bad with bronchitis and the doctor said she would not recover. I would have gone if I had not felt so weak: now I hear she is better again and begs me not to go. I'm glad Galsworthy's play<sup>1</sup> was such a success and wish he had given it a better name. The story as told in the papers does not interest me in the least: but that's no criterion. R. Curle sent me his last book *Wanderings* and is waiting to hear me tell him my opinion: a great disappointment after such a book as *Shadows out of the Crowd*. Also I had *Tatterdemalions* from Galsworthy – another disappointment! One or two good little sketches and the rest mere rakings together of slight newspaper stuff. That yarn about the German prostitute isn't true and is (to me) offensive. Just now I'm reading Meredith's *Egoist*. How false it all is! When Dickens drew a character like Peck-

<sup>1</sup> *The Skin Game.*

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

sniff you know it as an outrageous caricature but you rejoice in it all the same, but few are the writers that can draw caricatures that please us. All the critics that have ever been praise Sir Willoughby Patterne as a wonderful achievement — they were all wrong. Sir W. P. is simply Meredith and all his people are Meredith, with this or that virtue or foible, or quality of some sort *added to them*. He must have been a sort of egoist himself or at all events he was incapable of detachment enough to sink himself in somebody else. That's what makes his novels so unspeakably tedious: nothing but the perpetual cleverness of words can lead you on to read him. I am so fond of truth, of sincerity, in a novel that I can hardly enjoy one unless it is by some Russian. But poor Russia! when will she give us novels again? Perhaps when she does they will be too bluggy even for that Helen's baby who loved to hear the story of David and Goliath.

With love to you both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

May 19th, 1920.

Yours just received. If I do finish *my* short story (about 20,000) before end of May will send it right on. Hartleys came yesterday and send love: he took your paper to read. They are going in June to Llandudno for 3 weeks, then to London. My doctor seems rather floored by the M. paper. Ray Lankester has just been writing

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

letters to me to make me understand that he is a naturalist and I'm not one — I am a 'Literary Artist.' It's rather an amusing disputation. With love,

W. H. H.

This card may serve to show that Hudson, in spite of the bricks he threw occasionally at Sir Ray Lankester, was by no means so angry with him as he sometimes seemed to be. The truth is that he always aimed at the 'Professor' and not at all at Sir Ray.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*May 28th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm sending you the MS. — about 20,000 — a long short story, — in the hope that you will be able to judge and return it in a few days as I may be able to go up pretty soon. What I want to know is — Is it worth printing or not? If not say so: but don't tell me to re-write it because I can't — because it has been a burden to me ever since I began to write it. I thought it was a mistake and a waste of time, seeing that I might in the same time have accomplished half a dozen chapters more of the N. Hist. book which is far more interesting as well as valuable — in spite of Ray Lankester's saying that I am a Literary Artist and not a Naturalist. I can do no more than mend some glaringly wrong passage. I have been taking aspirin to make me sleep, and it has been some benefit but I'm afraid of all drugs and so try to bear my ills rather than take them.

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I don't know what after effects it may have. I hope you are progressing and will soon be able to get to Exmoor. I only wish I could see Simonsbath and the Barle once more!

We have been having sea fogs here and I have been nowhere yet. Twice the Ranee has sent the car for me to go to Lelant and St. Ives but I couldn't go, having slept badly.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

This MS. was *Dead Man's Plack*, sent to me and to Mr. Edward Garnett for remarks. See Letters 141, 142 in *Letters from Hudson*, 1923. In spite of the fact that Mr. Garnett and I differed as to the value of the story I am still of the opinion, which was certainly not very far from Hudson's, that it is not worth a single chapter of *A Hind in Richmond Park* and that the Preamble is the best part of it. This, of course, does not apply to *An Old Thorn*, in the same volume.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

June 1st, 1920.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for help — have just received MS. back. I sent a copy to Garnett at the same time and if his verdict is like yours — that is to say, if he says it is worth printing I'll try by and by to look at it again and then let it go to Duckworth to do what he likes about it. And if he thinks it

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

worth bringing out I can put another story with it to make it a small book. That is my story of A Thorn Tree – or *An Old Thorn*, I think it was entitled when it appeared some years ago. It is fairly good – May Sinclair said it was the best thing I've ever written. But its peculiar interest is the *subject* – the survival of something like tree-worship in England. But the story dates back to about 1835 and the last vestige of tree-worship may have died out by now. Yesterday I had an outing – the first I've had since I came. The Ranee sent her car and I went to Lelant and picked her up, then to St. Ives to visit an artist (word illegible) at his studio full of canvases – some of gigantic size – of gulls and gannets mostly; but I didn't like them much. He exhibits in the Academy and one huge picture in his studio was in it 6 years ago and still remains unsold. The Hartleys are in Wales now – he could make nothing out of your malignant pamphlet. It only made him gasp and stare – like those who read Milton's *Tetrachordon* or whatever it was. I send you a small pat of butter as I can't find an empty tin that will accommodate a bigger piece. It will do for one breakfast, I suppose. I shall probably go up next week. To-morrow if fine I'm going with the Ranee in motor to Godolphin to visit the Rector there. An interesting man to both of us. He was a Civil Servant in British Guiana, and had frontier work at the Indian Stations to do: and then he became convinced that he was not in the right spiritual atmosphere, so he resigned and had a wash or bath of theology and got ordained, and then (with nothing but a poor curate's pay to live on) married a frail young wife. He has been living . . . for the last 4 or 5 years, in Gwithian and St. Erth's, and has now been

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

exalted to the Rectorship of Godolphin. An ascent from Purgatorio to Paradise! And we are anxious to congratulate him.

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

As regards *An Old Thorn*, it is doubtful if tree-worship in some form is yet extinct in England and elsewhere. We are far too apt to think what we may not share is altogether dead. A peculiar regard for trees, and a trace of the ancient belief in their personality, easily renews itself in some primæval forest. It may perhaps be remarked that the over-favourable distinction awarded to *An Old Thorn* by the well-known writer named in this letter seems to me utterly inexplicable and even absurd.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

Sunday (July 1920).

Your card received last evening. I'm not going to W.'s to-morrow as I'm engaged: other days shall lunch there probably — I may have to go to the Strand or the City on one or two days. But I'm not feeling well just now — it will depend on health, etc., whether I go to more distant regions or not. What think you of the Cambridge congress of advanced Anglicans who are discussing the Beginnings of Christianity and the person of Jesus Christ? The Church has always been the most advanced in the Christian world, but has never succeeded in keeping quite abreast

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

of modern thought, the result being that they have been scouted by both sides – the Christian in the orthodox camp and the scientist – the free-thinker. They are always being left behind by the latter and are regarded as dangerous heretics by the former: and that's been the state of things since the *Essays and Reviews* period. Now these Cambridge men have come up to the front with a rush which will cause the Pope and Cardinals and Patriarchs and evangelists all the world over to hold up their holy hands in horror (some alliteration that). They throw over Bishop Gore as an old fogey – the Gore who frightened the Church a few years ago! Not only do they regard the virgin birth of J. C. as nonsense but they declare that J. C. was nothing in his soul and spirit but a mere man and so on – just like any of us! Well, it had to come, and the Nonconformist will have in the end to follow the Anglicans, and the Pope and the Methodists will have to put their heads together to consider what's to be done. We know his Holiness of Rome has been able to keep down modernism in the old rough and ready way with threats of excommunication and so on, but in England he will no longer be able to hound English R.C.'s to their death as in the melancholy cases of Father Tyrrell and St. George Mivart. But the question is interesting even to the modernist and scientist, for after all he has a religion of sorts and he will begin to see that it doesn't differ much from Christianity as interpreted now at Cambridge.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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WORTHING,

*July 20th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am returning on Thursday to London and you might be able to name a day when you and Naomi can come to Whiteley's one day to lunch. You might drop me a line on Tuesday and let me know about it. I have felt very unwell all the time I've been here and it is perfectly exasperating as I was in a difficult part of my random speculations about the origin of music in animals and man.<sup>1</sup> A long subject to be despatched in a chapter! But other subjects equally important too attract me too and must find a place. Perhaps you may have guessed that my plan is not to appear to have a plan, but ramble on and let each fresh subject rise as it were by chance out of the one before and so ramble on through all the senses and faculties.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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TOWER HOUSE,

*October 20th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I haven't written sooner because of being unwell – feeling heart very weak, and as it didn't pulse rapidly I feared taking digitalis, as I don't suppose that when it's

<sup>1</sup> *A Hind in Richmond Park.*

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

beating slowly the drug can help it. Of course I've read your book, in some cases re-read it and in that most difficult paper Inhibition and the Cardiac Vagus you say something about digitalis which comes to the same thing — viz. that it's only effective when the heart is too hurried in its beats. Mackenzie told me not to take it when the heart beats very slowly. Perhaps it would be best for me to see the specialist as to that point. My poor wife has also been very bad and near to vanishing the last fortnight. I was advised by the doctors, nurses, etc., not to go down, as that would frighten her and she would think the doctor had sent for me just after going up to town and that it was all over with her. I think if she lived to be a thousand she would never get over her intense dread of death. The only possible thing to give her any ease and comfort is for doctors, nurses, visitors and everybody in fact to say that she is looking quite well and will soon be out again. I can't cheat myself in that way — or any way at all. Which is a bad thing as John Stuart Mill said, seeing that if we get rid of illusions we might as well tie a millstone round our neck and jump off the cliff at Tolpedenpenwith or from a higher one if it can be found within a reasonable distance. But then it is difficult to decide a point like that. Santayana seems to maintain that *all* arts, especially the greatest, are essentially poor, vulgar, tricky, stupid and I don't know what else that's despicable, but at the same time he says they are very delightful and make us feel nice: it is as if he kicked and kissed at the same time. If this poor silly creature Art doesn't hold you back with her white arms and her naughty smile you must follow stern Reason, and *she* will guide you straight to the hell of

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

despair. Mill and Santayana seem to have a meeting point in their philosophy of life.

To-day I am out of bed in the afternoon, but could get no sleep last night.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

Tuesday, November, 1920.

Have just returned from H. St.<sup>1</sup> where I had two hours with Dr. P.<sup>2</sup> He is very pleasant to know and takes a keen interest in his subject, — and is a 5 guinea man. He asked me to remember him to you: but he had not heard of your book *Warfare* so I don't know what he knows about you. He kindly remarked that I had written wonderful books — but I know well enough he has never read a line of mine and had never heard my name before you telephoned to him. All our conversation and his own confession about his life, and the effect his profession and special study have had on it only serves to confirm my belief as to the effect — the reflex effects — of a profession on a man's mind — and what that belief is you know.

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> Harley Street.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. F. Price, M.D.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 13th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I forget whether I've written to you or not since I came here last Tuesday. I think I sent a card. It is very cold with much snow to-day but it doesn't lie, so we are better off than you in London, where the weather must be atrocious. And we have had much sunshine every day — it seemed like Paradise, oh Paradise, after London. But I met with an accident Saturday evening. I went to tea with the Baileys — people I know here, and there was Tregarthen, who writes the autobiographies of foxes and badgers and such like books, and Stanhope Forbes and his new young wife and others. We had much talk about Art and other futile subjects and talking of sounds in people's ears like pistol shots and thunder-claps which wake them at night, Forbes said it was caused by small blood-vessels in the brain getting ruptured. I said no and explained the cause of such sounds and he was astonished and said it was a tremendous relief as he was much afflicted that way.<sup>1</sup> I came back by a black road where it suddenly dips and the pavement is 4 feet high, and just then I stepped off. And down into the road I came with a crash. And there the 'muscular sense' as Bell called it came to my aid so that my weight came on my right hand, and it sprained my wrist and a stone lacerated my hand right through a knitted glove. I thought to myself I shall not hold a pen again for many

<sup>1</sup> See *W. H. Hudson, A Portrait*, p. 252.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

a day; but already in two days the hand is recovering – the swelling down and the fingers all pliable so that to-day I was able to write some letters. First I put Fryer's Balsam on the wound, then yesterday and to-day zinc ointment and the wound is drying up. My right knee (which helped the hand) was black and blue and stiff, but that's getting better also. I think that if I must go out again by night I will have a light – one need not carry an old time horn lantern now as it is easy to get an electric lamp. Did you see the review of *Dead Man's Plack* in *The Times Supplement*? I daresay it was by Clutton Brock as he writes like that: but I agreed with it all through. Garnett writes to me to say that he entirely disagrees with it. But I always disagree with Garnett – or nearly always. In politics especially, as he wants to destroy England for treating the gentle Irish so cruelly. With love to both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

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December 14th.

I have re-opened letter to say yours just received. I smiled at your idea that I can find apartments for you. I had been told that there's no such thing to be had. Well, while reading letters Dr. Miller dropped in and I read him part of your screed – the part about coming down and murdering him.<sup>1</sup> He said he was sure his wife

<sup>1</sup> This was to remind Dr. Miller that he was to send me word if Hudson fell ill.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

would be able to find you apartments and so perhaps that will be all right.

Strange to say Penzance as well as London and England generally is all white with a big fall of snow and last night and yesterday it snowed a great deal, but it melted: now it is lying.

A letter I had this morning from a young lady of mature years tells me of an offer of marriage she has had and been considering. He is 18 years her senior, in bad health and she doesn't care a bit for him, but she considered it because of her unhappiness at home. Now she has come to the conclusion that it would not be worth while getting *out of the fire into the frying pan*. A lovely bit of unconscious humour: but she isn't Irish.

*December 14th.*

Dr. Miller just dropped in to give me this card and says Mrs. Miller finds it is the only apartment she can hear of to be vacant soon. They will be vacant next Tuesday — a week from to-day, and I think he said a day would be required to make them ready for fresh guests. Mrs. Rudman is known to Mrs. Miller and is highly respectable, good cook, etc., etc., etc. The house is near the bottom (the sea end) of Alexandra Road, and her charge is 3 guineas per week for two bed and one sitting room with attendance. She can't give *hot* dinners later than 7, but can give soup, fish or eggs at any hour if wanted. I remember the place is about 10 or 12 minutes' walk from my own digs, but of course I never go such long distances now. I send it off at once as 'Penzance is congested' and you might like to make up your mind

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

instantly and if so to send her a wire to say you'll take them from such a date.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*December 19th, 1920.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Had your note yesterday and hope it will be all right about the apartments, as I'm not able to walk and look to it myself. I don't know if you wrote to the person or only wired, as if she had other applicants she would not know perhaps who you were or that it was Mrs. Miller who had recommended her. You had better write to make sure. I am sorry that you went with that poem to Dent since he knows that I know that he confidently expects me to show him anything I have in the first place and he is hurt and disappointed that I have 'employed' others to hawk my work about. I can only say to him that I have nothing to do with it or to say about it. But he is the last man in the publishing business I should have offered poetry to as he doesn't publish it. Years ago when I expressed surprise at his rejection of a volume of very good poetry from one who had already published a first collection, he replied that he was not going to throw any more money away on poetry — that it was always a dead loss to him. It would have been all right with the ballad if I had carried out my first inten-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

tion about it which was to get it illustrated with about a dozen or 20 full page pictures and have it produced as a Xmas booklet *anonymously*. The trouble and expense prevented me from doing it and I thought no more about it. You had best send it to one of the poetry shops that print anything in rhyme or that calls itself poetry. But you won't get any money for it!

I shall send *Ralph Herne* to Knopf in N. York—if I can do an amusing foreword, saying what I think of my ‘literary reputation’ and how profoundly I respect the judgment of those who laud my stuff. I’m sorry I can’t get to feel any better and must keep to the house so will not be able to go anywhere about with you when you come. I suppose it was the fall that makes me feel stiff and sore all over.<sup>1</sup>

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

January 18th, 1921.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I can't consent. When I let you take the poem I said Take or do what you like and sell it for anything you can get. . . . And I don't want more money than I want. I am getting enough for all my wants which are moderate

<sup>1</sup> For the interval between this and the next letter see *W. H. Hudson, A Portrait*.

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and if my wife were to die to-morrow I should get rid of it all before getting out of the planet myself and see that something was done with it. I have been very ill the last few days with a fit of indigestion so yesterday took the least possible nourishment and slept better last night and feel my stomach getting back to its normal state. I have I think about 7 or 8 letters this morning and several must be answered but I'll return your cutting<sup>1</sup> later or to-morrow when I have read it.

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

I was to see the photos when finished this week and will keep one: the other two will be sent to Naomi.

I forgot to put this in when I wrote yesterday. Very good but he does not get a good grip of anything. But then there are too many subjects to deal with in one review. To notice them all was not to notice well.

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LONDON,  
January, 1921.

MY DEAR HUDSON,

I've been going to write at length about this, that and the other for a long time but don't seem able to get hold of anything to say, although I felt it was in me somewhere. I hope you are sleeping a bit better. Don't forget to ask

<sup>1</sup> Review by Professor Sir William Bayliss of *Warfare in the Human Body*.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Miller to let you try Pot. Brom. I'm sure he won't mind my making such a suggestion for he seemed a sensible man, not above listening to a pure outsider.

As regards Prof. Bayliss's review of *Warfare* you are of course quite right. B. tried to do too much and couldn't review everything and the obvious truth is that he was incapable of reviewing the biological and pathological sections of the book. Still Keith was pleased that so eminent a physiologist should give me two pages in *Nature*. He said that his approval even if modified would open the door for me among the physiological crowd, a very close corporation. The book has sold over 250 and keeps on going on slowly, so Nash is quite pleased and looks forward with some hope to getting his money back. Duttons have inquired as to the prices for 250 or 500 sets of sheets for America. I hope the deal will go through for I should like it to be printed out yonder.

On Friday I took it into my head to rush out of London for the day and went down to Rochester, a city I have never seen, and went over the Cathedral which is well worth a visit and has some extraordinary transition work in it: it is indeed a museum of all Gothic periods. The keep of the old castle is also very fine. I was much pleased with the place because I had always thought it a dirty manufacturing place. As I saw the sunset over the white or muddy Medway the scene was very beautiful from a pure point of colour and I wished I could paint it.

I have undertaken to revise a volume of country sketches which I think you'll believe very beautiful stuff. The feeling for nature, birds, and human character is really very fine and all I am doing to it is shortening a little and

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

eliminating some touches of the amateur which give such opportunities for the meaner class of critic. The part about birds will please you, I am sure.

By the way do you know anybody connected with birds and bird life called Ogilvie Grant? I rather think he believes with you that the rich collector is the very worst enemy of rare bird life in England.

I got a letter from Porthgwarra the other day from my old friend Mrs. Jackson whom I went to see when Naomi and I were at Land's End in Porthgwarra itself. She is the wife of the poor fisherman who is now paralysed, and a very brave, even beautiful, woman. Her letter was curiously pathetic. Next time I go to Cornwall I must go and see them again. I believe Miller had treated Jackson but of course the case is hopeless.

By the way somebody asked me the other day whether your father was born in England. I said I didn't know but thought he was. I believe you did tell me but my memory is fearfully treacherous just now, I can't trust it for things that happened yesterday. Naomi is looking forward to the photographs and so am I. I remember most keenly that one of you in the photographer's shop, one in which you looked as if you might be the president of the great republic of the earth. It really has immense dignity: in many ways it's one of the most successful things I ever saw of you, though it leaves out your native wildness.

Well, I thought I had something to say, but it seems I haven't. My brain won't tick, very like a watch that wants cleaning. It's rather lucky that I have some work to do which makes no great demands upon my imagination, for

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

however flat-footed I may feel as regards that I can always be critical, and I shall be busy over this revision for about a month. By that time I may be able to get back to short stories. I expect to get my copies of *Lyra Mutabilis* in a week or two and shall send you one.

Our love to you,

M. R.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

January 25th, 1921.

I have little time but must write a line in reply to your letter — a question in it — which you say is about NOTHING. But we know from at least two esteemed ancient writers — both fragrant of ‘ancientry’ — Sir Stafford Northcote and Hilaire Belloc — that ‘Nothing’ may be made to mean a good deal.

You ask about Ogilvie Grant. Yes, I have known him intimately many years as our leading authority on the ornithology of the world generally, who succeeded Bowdler Sharpe as head of the Bird Department of the Museum of Natural History. Then (from being first a collector himself) he joined our Bird Society and was one of the most useful members on the Council, and usually spent his holidays on long journeys to out-of-the-way places, the north of Scotland and the Western Islands included, to inspect our preserved areas and appoint watchers of breeding-bird colonies for the year. A man in perfect health and still comparatively young, he was

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

a few years ago struck down by a sudden illness—a ‘stroke,’ and when he recovered and returned to the Museum, on two occasions found he could no longer concentrate his mind on his work and so had to resign. It was a blow to us all as we greatly esteemed him and valued his services. He lives in Sussex now but does no work. He is of the Ogilvie Grants, the Seafield family or branch.

Yours ever with love to both — the photos were posted on Saturday.

W. H. H.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*February 10th, 1921.*

Yours received with rabbit-story — but you don’t say where you got it from. Salt sent me the book of Savages when it came out some weeks ago. No one who knows him and his books and work ever regarded him as a ‘crank’ — except the funny journalist *and* the Brutilian. Most of the reviews have been very favourable. I told Salt — who feared the book would fall flat — that it would be a success — partly because of the title. Health much as usual — ups and downs. Wonderful weather the last two days: windless, intense brilliant sunshine: sea like the tropics: quite warm. I have just had to get the tenant of my flat turned out as he proved unsuitable. He left owing me £24 which I shall never see. The Ranee has just come down and was over here yesterday to have tea

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

with me. Shall go to lunch to-morrow as she is sending the car. With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

February 14th, 1921.

I don't know if you know Dr. Walter Kidd and his work on hair growth<sup>1</sup> these many years past? I heard him read an interesting paper on that subject about 20 or more years ago, and had some conversation with him. He didn't seem to like the dead silence that followed his reading. Not a word was spoken in reply, which gave one the idea that he was not considered quite orthodox. I see that in his new work *Initiative in Evolution* (1920) he says: — 'Initiative in animal evolution comes by stimulation, excitation and response to new conditions and is followed by repetition of these phenomena until they result in structural modifications transmitted and directed by relation to the law of genetics: a series of events which agree with Neo-Lamarckian principles.' That is pure Samuel Butler: and even as Darwin's 'greatness' consists in his 'vast accumulation of facts' which compelled the world to listen to his story of Evolution, against which they had turned a deaf ear for a century, so Butler's 'greatness' consists in compelling the masters of science

<sup>1</sup> *Use-Inheritance, Illustrated by the Direction of Hair on the Bodies of Animals*, 1901.

*Direction of Hair in Animals and Man*, 1903.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

to drop their Darwin and Weismann and go back to Lamarck. By and by they will follow F. Darwin's example and acknowledge their debt to Butler.

That's all I'm writing about. Cloudy, coldish, bursts of sunshine, rain, warm intervals — am writing with window wide open. Had an afternoon with the Garstins yesterday: . . . I like his daughter, an artist, who began to exhibit in the R.A. at the age of sixteen. Yours with love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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LONDON,  
*February, 1921.*

DEAR HUDSON,

No, I know nothing of Walter Kidd's work. Perhaps you can give me some references. Is he the son of Dr. Percy Kidd, the tuberculosis specialist? I know him very well, and his father was one of my own father's doctors. He was Benjamin Kidd. As to Samuel Butler it has always been my opinion, perhaps wrongly so, that B. really put back the case of Lamarck by getting everybody's back up by the way he treated Darwin. After all the academic man of science is a human being, and he certainly was very insolent. I almost fancy it was his way of talking which made the Darwinians become Neo-Darwinians and welcome Weismann. Although S. B. was right in some ways I find few if any of his arguments really convincing and to my mind his unconscious memory

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

is altogether a misuse of language and confuses the whole problem. However to that part of his teaching I suppose none but a vitalist pays any attention. Of course I don't deny we owe B. a debt but it's a pity he was so savage.

I saw H. V. to-day. His new play *The Hour and the Man* got a frightful slating from the critics but so far seems to be doing well enough. He wrote the play with Snaith. I daresay you know some of his work. He's a very good chap with very unstable health. I hear *Warfare* is greatly appreciated by Professor Morrison up at Newcastle-on-Tyne. Percival the oculist tells me the Professor is quite enthusiastic on the subject. It's now sold well over 300 and goes along fairly steadily. I am going over the book<sup>1</sup> from which I cut that bit about the poor old blind rabbit and it's very good stuff indeed, and I'm sure the author, if he chose, could give equally good stuff about birds and animals, for he seems to have been a great observer and is well accustomed to all the tricks of that particular trade.

We were to have gone to Vachell's play to-night but I've passed the tickets on to Lacon Watson as I'm not very well and Naomi does not want to go out to-night. I'm glad you've some sunshine along your way. Here we have a little touch of it occasionally but it's very cold and dangerous weather as far as I'm concerned. The King opens Parliament to-day: town crowded of course but luckily I missed most of it. We shall know this week no doubt whether we're going to have another railway strike. Our love to you.

M. R.

<sup>1</sup> *Somerset Neighbours.*

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

February 20th, 1921.

I had yours of the 17th and am unable to say whom Dr. Walter Kidd is related to: all I know is that he is the son of old Kidd — it wouldn't do to say old Goat. Of course *Initiative in Evolution* is a book. I saw that H. Vachell's new play was slated by the critics. If Snaith is the Somerset man who writes novels and books about Exmoor, I don't care much about him. He is one of a host of modern writers whose books I am able to do without. Everything you say about Butler I am forced to disagree with, and the reason of it, I believe, is because you refuse to inform yourself of the rights of the matter — I mean about his quarrel with Darwin. Your feeling about it is just what the general feeling was 25 years ago, when Darwinism pure and simple was still unchallenged and his Natural Selection had become a sort of gospel in biology. Butler and Darwin were in friendly correspondence: but (as often happens) they warmed over their difference, and presently Butler wrote and asked Darwin to explain certain statements he had made. Darwin wrote his reply and if he had posted it there would have been no quarrel; but at the last moment he unfortunately thought he would consult his bosom friend and adviser, old Sir Joseph Hooker. And Hooker said — 'Don't answer him — he is an outsider and has no right to demand explanations of anything you say, treat him with silent contempt.' And Butler, treated with contempt, published the correspondence — and the fat was in the fire. And

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

the Professors all turned their backs on Butler and refused to read his book. Sir F. Darwin himself has confessed that it was a mistake of his father going to old Hooker for advice and has acknowledged the great debt owing to Butler for his work on Evolution. I think he is a convert to Lamarckianism through Butler. You say that Butler *put back* Lamarck with his theory of 'Unconscious Memory.' Is it so? I think it just the contrary. 'Unconscious Memory' is a name, a label, and Butler's tentative explanation of what remains a mystery — the secret of the fact and marrow of the transmission of acquired characters — which Lamarck left a mystery. You can accept it or reject it but that does not upset Butler's claim to have compelled the biologists, his enemies, to go back to Lamarck. I have just bought Darwin's *Instinct in Men* — do you know it?

W. H. H.

Hudson's views upon transmission were founded rather upon his general feelings as regards the part played in evolution by the environment than upon any study of the later work for and against the Lamarckian theories. He seemed unable to see that the very phrase 'Unconscious Memory' begged the whole question and indeed confounded in a merely verbal explanation biology and that verbal psychology in which so many metaphysicians find a playground. It may, I think, be doubted whether Butler's influence was a tithe of what Hudson thought it, for however he and Darwin disagreed there was always in Darwin far more Lamarckianism than the Neo-Darwinians seem able to swallow, since they accepted

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Weismann without discovering that the German biologist has as little practical logic in him as any vitalist—or as those who believed in Hartzocker's homunculus. Of course it may be added that a translation of Butler's 'unconscious memory' into bio-chemical factors, hormones and the like, is possible but when it is accomplished Butler and Hering-Semon and their followers remain merely among those who made guesses and, from a point of view not their own, were not wholly wrong.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*March 18th, 1921.*

Book received. I am too unwell and in a most anxious state about my wife, who is unconscious and sinking, but Dr. Miller tells me I am not fit to travel, so must wait here.

Yours,

W. H. H.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*April 1st, 1921.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

You ask how my wife is! I was under the impression I had a letter from you a few days ago to say you were sorry to hear of her death. It may be a mistake as it seems I've had that sort of letter from scores of people, both known and unknown to me. Of course I informed no one as the notice was put in all the morning papers. And as I think I told you when I wrote I was too ill to attend—

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

the Dr. said it would be my death. And no doubt he was right, as I think it a wonder I have not gone off one of these last days. My heart has never been worse.

I have had to make a new will in a hurry to make sure that the small amount I'm leaving after a few legacies, will be used by the Bird Society in my way. Also to make sure that not a scrap of written paper or manuscript (barring the MS. of the book I'm doing) shall be kept. Of course I can't, dead or living, prevent people writing about me if they feel 'so disposed,' but I would far rather be forgotten the instant I quit the scene. And that's just when it interests me more than ever before. And my desire unsatisfied. What a poor trashy 'little spite' that was which Fate played on Hamlet compared to this one.

I return the cutting with congratulations – or congrats, as I believe they call it now. Of course Osbourne is a great good man if he did it. I see he quotes most from the one I like best – that is, after the sonnet to me, and there I may judge partially. He is right in thinking the poem to N. like Marvell – one of my favourites. My 'congrats' then to N. and love to both.

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*April 19th, 1921.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I am as usual – never well or at ease, but just crawling on. I dare say Dr. Hurst discovered that imagination

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

had something to do with your ill health. Your scientific interest made you a pathologist and you concentrated too much on yourself instead of leaving yourself out and going for others. But if H. can do all these miracles of Christ he must be a marvellous person. It has been very cold and I have not yet had a day outside of Penzance. The Ranee says she is coming over in her car to take me to Godolphin this week, as we both want to go to visit the vicar there: — the ghost-seer. ‘Talking of ghosts’ reminds me that I’ve got a chapter on the sense of direction I should rather like you to read, as I may want to revise or alter it. I hear nothing of the decision about *Green Mansions* for the films. I hope you will have luck this time. But are the Americans going to throw us over? The first article in the *A. Bookman* for this month says: ‘The umbilical cord of our derived culture has ceased to pulsate!’ Anything so beautifully expressed must be true. Yet I hear the 1st Edition of some of my books sell for £20. I should advise you to send all yours to America and get something for them. The later editions are better for reading. I am going to send mine — or those that are not ragged — I suppose I have about 40 1st Editions. How good it will be to be at Simonsbath! and Glorious Old York!

With love to you both,

W. H. HUDSON.

The reference in the early part of this letter is to Dr. A. F. Hurst of Guy’s Hospital and the ‘miracles’ Hudson speaks of are to be found in the records of the Seale Haynes Hospital as well as in the records of work done by other

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

doctors. An inspection of these documents might be useful to all religious miracle-mongers and faith-healers especially at the present time, when those who should know better are blindly encouraging totally unsuitable cases of illness and disability to hope when hope is vain and can but lead to bitter disappointment. At very little knowledge of the pathology of hysterical patients – and ‘hysteria’ is now properly defined as a condition which can be caused and cured by suggestion – would lead to some discrimination between those who can be helped, and those who cannot. It may be useful to remark for the benefit of ignorant and enthusiastic ‘healers’ in churches and elsewhere, that religion has so little to do with these cases that at the Seale Haynes Hospital the cured patients often cured apparently hopeless cases by breaking down, by their own example, the induced cerebral and nervous condition which had defied ordinary methods. But neither the suggestion of massed example nor the knowledge of physicians can avail where there has been organic destruction.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*April 27th, 1921.*

I have your letter, but I don't think I'll trouble you to read my chapter on Sense of Direction just now, as I am just tackling the migration question and as one follows the other I will ask you to read both at the same time. But this is a long and rather difficult subject and I don't

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

know how many days it will take me. It depends on health. Yesterday I had a visit from G. Trevelyan—the author of books about Italy, Garibaldi, histories, etc., and his daughter, a girl of 16 who has been my correspondent for the last 4 years. A girl who writes charming letters about birds, etc. And with them their host, Arnold Forster of the Eagle's Nest, Zennor. Do you remember it—a building like a castle on the summit of a high hill between St. Ives and Zennor? It belonged to Westlake K.C. and when he died this fellow bought it and lives there—a queer young man, an artist. He wants me to go and stay with him in his eyrie but I don't think I am well enough for that altitude. I got a car and went to Sennen a few days ago to visit the people I used to stay with and then came home by a round by Porthgwarra and Lamorna Cove. The furze is in its glory now and it looked splendid in the bright sunshine. We have had splendid bright dry weather for a long time past and very little cold. I doubt I shall be in London by May 15, tho' I'm anxious to go up as I've got plenty to do in London when I get there. You need not be astonished at . . . being ignorant. We are all that outside of our own little province—our own little musty collection of out of date facts. I see Leonard Huxley attacks McBride for his Lamarckianism in *Science Progress*, and McBride makes a damaging retort. I am with McBride. I read yours with difficulty and as a return have made this as illegible as I know how.

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

May 27th, 1921.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I don't think I shall be in London by the 17th — I don't want to leave here before about that date and as usual I shall want to have a day in Exeter as that Cathedral has a fascination for me.

For a week or so I felt fairly well and went for several drives in a car — one by way of St. Ives and Zennor to Morvah, Pendean, St. Just and Land's End. I was five hours out and not a bit tired so I daresay I can go up to town without much fatigue with a break at Exeter. About cats thinking, a lady writes me of a cat she had who would take a piece of bread and place it before a bush, then hide in the bush and wait for birds to come for the bread. Doubtful, I think. A day or two after *Cornhill* came out the Editor of *The Strand* wrote to ask if he could have second serial rights in the article as he wanted to print it in *The Strand* — in August I believe. Of course I consented as it was £20 more.

We are just now having it cold after a long spell of summer-like weather, and that has rather floored me again. I had arranged to go to Cape Cornwall to-day but had to give it up. The Ranee brought a genius for me to see a day or two ago — a Miss Colman Smith, who has bought a house at Landewadnock — at the Lizard. She is American or West Indian, and recites and sings strange folk-songs — white and negro. But her chief talent is drawing strange and weird pictures inspired by music.

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Hartley thinks they are wonderful. But I prefer her mysterious singing and reciting to her pictures. She told me she had published 2 or 3 little books of folk tales in America but they are not known here.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.,

June 7th, 1921.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have just managed to come up — in fear and trembling, but don't feel the worse for the journey. I am sending your poems back — or will as soon as I can get an envelope — I don't like to send it as you do in a slip of paper or with a slip round it.

Pretty well all your lyrics have thought and feeling wrought into real poetry, but without the magic one invariably looks for and doesn't always find in poetry, however good. That is as much as to say that it is pretty good but not great. Nor equal to your former little volume. I think the poems I like best are 'The Simple Woman' (without the moral), 'Despair' (which is painful), 'In Kensington,' 'The Village,' 'The Child-Bearer,' 'Hope,' 'The Friend,' 'The Mother.' Altogether there's a little too much harping on one string, as in Hardy's new volume — a fresh raking together of his drab 'Life's Little Ironies.' I like the first stanza of the Dedication and would prefer it alone. 'The Weeping Mother' I think should be thrown out.

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Have you seen Ford Madox Hueffer's 'Antwerp'?  
One of the best poems inspired by the War I think.

I hope you both enjoyed your holiday. You never told me if you saw the Hartleys.

I shall probably go to Ascot to see my doctor there on Tuesday next and stay for a few days.

Does Naomi want tickets for the Zoo?

With love to you both.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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8 BEDFORD ROW, WORTHING,

June 16th, 1921.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I'm not sure that the enclosed will interest you much, but it was lent to me as something very great in Pathology, and I'd like to hear what you will be able to say of it — before returning it to the sender. This Spicer Simpson is an artist — his studio is in Paris — and he has an order from a Syndicate of book-lovers in America to take medallion portraits of English writers, and that's what he is doing now. He came to me first with a letter from Galsworthy. By the bye I went to lunch with the Galsworthys before I left London — they were leaving the next day — so G. himself came in a car and took me to their house. We spoke of you and he said he had *not received your book of Lyrics*. Of course he would have written if he had had them. I had to go every day to the

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

Strand, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and such places when I was in London and the fatigue was killing. I came down here on Tuesday and it took 7 hours and a half from Victoria! You could get to Edinburgh in that time. I spent the day yesterday at the Broadwater Cemetery and wished that the grave could have been acquired in that part where Jefferies was buried. It is the loveliest spot with old stone pines and a wealth of flowers and wild plants. But the heads of this place would not allow it, so no man can be buried just there. I must be satisfied to rest, as they call it, in a less attractive spot. However there is a good pine tree by the grave and the turtle doves were crooning all the time I stayed there. The whole place seemed swarming with birds. I hope you are getting all right again. I shall be back early next week, Monday probably, so please send me my pamphlet to St. Luke's Road, W.II.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*July, 1921.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I hope you and Naomi are enjoying the glorious old city. I wish I could be there too. The old City which figures so tremendously in England's past. So much blood and horror and some beautiful things. St. Helena was a beautiful woman and she was born in York and after-

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

wards married the Emperor Constantine and had the Vision of the Cross. But when I spent a little time in York I was mostly interested in the swifts, they were in such numbers and I used to sit on the wall of an evening and watch them flying high up and going higher and higher as it grew darker at ten o'clock, until you could neither see nor hear them. I daresay in this hot weather they are still having their nights out up in the sky.

You say that if I feel really ill and do not ask you to come and see me it will hurt you very much. I wonder how many scores of people far and near have said the same thing to me the last year! And if I could answer truly I could say — When I am very bad and death looks near then let no one I know come near me. I have Sir Thomas Browne's feeling about that, and when Shakespeare speaks of 'troops of friends' to make one's going out of life seem a rather pleasing process, I feel that he was not quite a natural man. In pain and peril let me always be alone — that is an instinct in man as well as in the stricken deer. The heat so told on me that I had to keep two days to my bed, but feel better since this coolness came on and was out a good deal yesterday. I don't suppose it was so hot in York. I don't know when I shall leave London. I must have some doing up done in my flat before I go.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*August 4th, 1921.*

4th of August<sup>1</sup>—an evil date for me! If to-morrow will suit come with Naomi to Whiteley's at 1 to 1.20 or 30 and I shall be there. *My* lunch this time. I am much as usual. It is cooler and seems now a little cool of an evening.

W. H. H

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*August 8th, 1921.*

Don't come 'on the chance' or you will probably find no one to open the door to you—all are gone on holiday or come home late in the evening. I go out at 12.30 and as a rule go somewhere to tea with people in the afternoon, and am not home till 9. Don't come with a razor, as your 'camping out' would involve more work for me than a whole week of looking after myself. With love to both.

W. H. H.

<sup>1</sup> Hudson's birthday.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*Sunday (1921).*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I enclose Price's reply to my letter, which means that I am not to be experimented on: – that must be done to hospital patients and others of no importance. I suppose it is a new discovery that this drug may be of use but I don't quite know how. My chemist is a well-informed person with a deep interest in medical matters, and he says he has not heard of this drug<sup>1</sup> being used for the heart: but it was popular in cases of asthma some years ago and has fallen out of use in recent years.

I can't away this week and perhaps you and Naomi could come one day to lunch at W.'s? If so please name your day. I am glad to say that Lord G. and Lady Glenconner are going to make a match of it. Their closest friends have been expecting some such conclusion of their long and intimate friendship and I'm certain that if the late Lord G. is anywhere about in Doyle's other world or state he will smile consentingly on it.

I had tea yesterday at . . . and met a number of people there including . . . I had not seen him since the . . . far off days of Oliver Hobbes. Well, he is like you, he doesn't change much – I mean physically. His intellect is about the same as it was – not too strong.

With love,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> Quinidine sulphate, given of late with some success in cases of auricular fibrillation in young patients.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

(1921).

DEAR ROBERTS,

I forgot to ask you to tell me the initials of Napier<sup>1</sup> the engineer who wrote the book about the Mosquito Indians. I thought I had the book but can't find it.

A day or two ago I was at the Z. library and Chalmers Mitchell showed me an article in *Nature* of week before last (in case you haven't seen it) giving some account of the researches of Prof. Smith Eliot and Dr. Henry Head's

<sup>1</sup> The book Hudson wanted is *Tangweera*, not by Napier, but by C. Napier Bell. I sent him my copy. It is the best book on the general zoology, etc., of the Mosquito Coast.

To what extent the decay of the sense of smell in civilized people, if indeed it has decayed in those who are healthy, is due to the development of other senses, is extremely doubtful. It is true that the whole forebrain has sprung from the great development of the primary ganglia connected with the ancient olfactory nerves, but that affords no great reason for saying that the olfactory centre has in any way degenerated. If it had we should not find cases, among Europeans and other races less debauched by what we call civilization, of an extreme acuity of smell. That this power can be lost by nasal disorders, especially those which are chronic, is well known, and when we discover that the usual condition of the nasal mucous membrane in northern districts is actually morbid, and the pocket-handkerchief is a medical appliance, there can be little doubt that such constant nasal trouble must disorder the sense of smell. I may remark that when in dry tropical and sub-tropical countries I am happily unconscious that I possess a nose at all. These facts suggest forcibly that the human race evolved in hot climates and is not yet adapted to a damp one.

The alterations Hudson speaks of in the last paragraph are those made in the fifth chapter of *A Hind in Richmond Park*.

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

researches – especially about smell. It says ‘The fundamental fact in evolution of intelligence is the significant part played by the sense of smell’ and so on, deeply interesting, but it is from anatomizing the brain that he gets his results and, as I told Mitchell, I am merely giving my personal observations.

There are several books by F. C. Selous in the Library but no such title as *Nature Notes in S. Africa*. You tell me to develop the statement of the ‘insurmountable objection’ to Darwin’s law. I didn’t think it was necessary to say it was the *swamping* effect of the whole species on an individual variation. However I’ve put a paragraph in to say that.

On thinking it over I find you are quite wrong on one point in which you say I am quite wrong. The sense of smell *is* decayed and colds have really little or nothing to do with it. Mitchell quite agrees with me that the development of vision is the cause. We see it in birds more than in man, for vision is even more important to them than to us, and in many species the sense has gone altogether.

You are rather funny when you say: ‘agreeable smells – those we know to appertain to pleasant and useful things.’ That is to say, the cowslip smell is agreeable to me because it is pleasant! Of course I know what your reply to *that* will be.

Anyhow I’ve put in such a lot of alterations and additional things I must have it all re-copied.

With love to both,  
Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*November 17th, 1921.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I suppose you want me to say something about the poetry tho' you know how hopelessly astray I go in trying to criticize. All I can say is just what I think – which doesn't matter. It isn't bad but not great, as you probably know without being told. Not up to the mark of your first verse of nearly 30 years ago. I always remember 'For you I think, for you I weep' and perhaps a dozen others in that tiny volume that had something of the magic we look for in true poetry. It just occurs to me to ask myself: What should I say of these poems if they had appeared anonymously and had been sent to me to review? I think I should have said that they had the true stuff of poetry in them but were not the work of a young man since their spirit was not exactly the modern one. I say *spirit* but it is no more exact than *form* or *convention*. I should have said they were 19th century in spirit: also that their author had not followed modern poetry otherwise he could not have escaped its influence. One can't but notice the difference in taking up a Victorian poet. We deliberately prepare ourselves for that period just as we put our minds in tune for the 17th century spirit when we take up Donne or Crashaw or any of the Carolines. There is certainly a great difference between the poetry of to-day and that of the last century – 20 years difference: in less time than that the 18th century period in poetry was blotted out. Of course poetry more than any other art or

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form of self-expression is a piece out of a man's very soul, a part of himself, or we may say out of his inwards like a bird's egg or a spider's web, but even a soul or our inwards absorb some trace of colour from the time we live in. There's little or no trace of such colouring in your verse: and no doubt the reason is that you abandoned poetry many years ago as a medium of expression and took to prose instead, emitting it largely. But you did not wholly abandon it — poetry — but turned back to it at intervals just to express some rare or peculiar mood — some tender or bitter memory, some emotion or fancy, which you could not express in any other form. It is a great thing that you have been able to keep this faculty alive for so many years and with so little practice. But one result of the little practice is that the poetic faculty has become more and more segregated as it were and less concerned with 'the diurnal scene' and realities whereas the new poetry seeks more and more to come down to life as it is.

All our great poets (Chaucer perhaps excepted) have stuck to their poetry like old boots all their lives long — from Milton to Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, the three Victorian giants; so that to be great in poetry it seems necessary that you should do nothing but 'sweat poetry' all your life, as Byron scornfully said. Poor Byron kicked against it and rushed forth to be a man of action — and died of pneumonia! He must often have wished he could change lives with his friend Trelawny. Well, it may be the greatest glory a man can reach to be a great poet but it is not one I should value greatly — I would rather have had Trelawny's life than Byron's and any

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

adventurer's rather than Tennyson's or Browning's.  
Them's my sentiments.

I like certain poems in each of the three divisions, but fewest in the last where you attempt the impossible since we can no more know the psychology of the other sex than we can know that of the people in Uranus, or even in Venus, which is only next door. But I like *The Weeping Mother*. By the bye why did you write —

Although I, too, beheld the ghost  
She feared, and I.

which means that you saw the ghost she had seen and feared and that it frightened you as well, and you might have said it without the disturbing I — I. In the first part I like best the lines 'Remember Me' and 'To N.' also 'The Return' and the first Sonnet. 'Failure' too: the long Beggarmen poem left me rather in a mist. 'Why' too in the third part is very good — except the last stanza. But I don't like 'The Cage' and think you had better have left the other.

By the bye, what about that note from Newton's *Migration* — I think I have it in my MS. notes which I haven't looked at for years, as the one and only hint I could find about the sense of polarity. Of course it was at once sat upon by the old conservative academic Newton — Prof. of Zoology for half a century at Cambridge, the doyen of the Ornithological world, who glared at me, an Argentine, who dared to come to England and write about birds — the English birds, I mean. Well, 'tis a long and very funny story about the great Birdist and poor little me. The funniest part of it was its culmination when he was

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head of a Section of the Brit. Ass. and in his address made a vindictive attack on my pamphlet *Lost British Birds*, then, to show there was no ill-feeling, he wrote a letter to *The Times* on some bird question in which he spoke very nicely of 'my friend, Mr. Hudson.' Poor old Newton of Magdalen, Cam. is now dead and gone and the estate he inherited from his father – Elvedon – is now the lordly home of Lord Iveagh – and the King is his guest there at this moment. Newton – or the Newtons – had to sell their estate when the Prof. was in his twenties, and the Government bought it for the Maharajah – what's-his-name – who ruined himself and sold it to Guinness. The result of Newton being Newton of Elvedon, and afterwards Prof. of Zoology, combined in himself the two souls of the conservative old-fashioned Squire and the academical professor in the University. They combined very well.

Yours with love,

W. H. HUDSON.

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QUEEN'S HOTEL, QUEEN STREET, EXETER,

November 27th, 1921.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Did you really think I could ask you and Naomi to drag yourselves out of bed at 8 or 9 o'clock and make your way to Paddington in a dense fog to see me off? I simply had to wait 8 or 9 days for an interval of ease from a jumping heart to venture on the journey and my first easy night was Friday last, so on Saturday morning I set out

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and caught the fast train at 10.30. It was thick fog for about 60 miles, then I dropped to sleep, and by and bye when I woke seeing hills and woods through the fog I asked a lady sitting opposite me if we had passed Westbury? 'Yes, we passed it,' she replied with a smile. I should think we had as we were just coming into Exeter! It rained all the evening and night and is cold and dull to-day. I went to the Cathedral service in the afternoon and shall go again for two services to-day — it is the only thing to do here. To-morrow I go at 10.45 to Penzance and pray to find a milder climate and a clearer atmosphere in that old village. My last few days in London were spent in destroying all the remnants of papers no longer needed, and letters, so I don't think there will be a scrap left for anyone to see when I have finished my wretched life here below — I mean before I go aloft. I wish I could hope that no friend will have anything to say about me in the papers when I have departed. If there is to be any post-mortem existence (on Conan Doyle's or any one else's theory) I should shudder at being obliged to read it.

With love to you both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

Hudson's remarks at the end of this letter must be taken with a grain of salt. I do not think that there was ever a more essentially modest writer than Hudson, but towards the end of his life he was well aware that he had reached such a position in English letters that it would be impossible for his surviving contemporaries to ignore him. Very often he said something to me about this and sometimes

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threw out dark hints that I should be one of the sinners, which I never denied for an instant. But what he truly dreaded was not a study of his personality or a criticism of his work, it was that anything should be printed concerning his more private life and affections. For this reason he got back and destroyed any letters written to women with whom he was on terms of kindly intimacy, for he was naturally and beautifully shy concerning them. Perhaps no man has inspired more admiration and affection, though nothing that he ever said in forty years led me to think so. I just knew it and never asked him a single question on such subjects. It may be added that as he became older he cared much less for any reputation that he might have gained, for he reached the philosophic standpoint that, after all, what any man achieved, or could achieve, was little or nothing. And if that was so why should any among the living exalt the dead who had done their work and passed into silence? If we who remember him cannot now take that view, it is because his work is not yet done and will not be accomplished for many long generations yet unborn.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 5th, 1921.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Thanks for letter and the books which I will read soon I hope; but just now my table is covered with books — some from the library, others I ordered, and others that

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friends are sending. I can't cry out - 'Hold, enough!' because I like to look at, even if I don't read, as many books as I can get hold of. I had tea with the Millers and he asked after you. Also at one or two or three other houses I have been to tea and met a crowd of people, mostly uninteresting. The only man with any nature-love here is a Solicitor who has the best collection of bird books in Cornwall and I am going to look at his library as I must see books to do the rest of my *Lost British Birds*. I have had 25 coloured plates made - they are just being finished now and I think them very good, better even than the coloured figures in *Birds of La Plata*. I came Saturday before last to Exeter and stayed there till Tuesday not feeling very well. But out of London fog I feel a great relief. Here it has been raining all the time and everyone exclaims against such detestable weather. I tell them to go to London and try that and that it is a million times better to be here in the rain than in that dreadful place. I don't know about moving. My old landlady tries to please me in every way she can but I refuse to be pleased and tell her so every day. I can't forgive her. . . . But I can't get any diggings that would suit me, with an open outlook and windows to the south. My rooms are almost too warm. I haven't seen the Hartleys and of course can't see them unless a bright sunny day should come when I could get a car and drive over to St. Ives.

With love to you both,  
Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 9th, 1921.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I have just discovered your *Convolutus* booklet here on opening a chest of books and magazines I left locked up when I returned to town last spring. Pardon for the oversight as I see from your notes you are probably finding the book useful. Yesterday I turned up the last few chapters I wrote six months ago for *A Hind in Richmond Park*. I see in the preliminary chapter about Migration I run over the theories advanced till now and one – the ‘lastest’ – may be called the Sun Theory, which would do with your tropism notion. But there’s absolutely nothing new in that notion. No doubt the movement towards the sun, if that could explain migration, is just as believable of a creature so volatile as a bird flying thousands of miles as of the movements of the smallest creatures who only migrate a distance of half an inch. The trouble is that it doesn’t explain migration. The bird that breeds in lat. 80 degrees north, then flies south keeps to your sun theory till it gets to the equator, where the sun is strongest; but it then brings the theory to nought by flying, on 20, 30, 40, and even more degrees past the equator. All the theories about migration are perfectly satisfactory so long as the difficulties are overlooked.

I am not doing anything – only resting and trying to get my lungs clear. It has been raining almost continuously since I came, and everyone said ‘What detestable weather!’ and to everyone I replied ‘What glorious weather!’ It is

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such a relief to be able to breathe. I go almost every afternoon to tea somewhere and the last few days I have spent going visiting at Lelant and Zennor. To-day at . . . it was curiously interesting. When, about 1904, I stayed there one winter I lodged with Mrs. . . ., a widow with two children, boy and girl. A nice pretty girl who now looks pulled down and has a husband out of work and a child. The boy, a healthy strong adventure-loving and book-unloving little fellow, I liked very much. When he left school he was engaged as a farmer's boy, then a young lady came on the scene and bought a farm and hired (him) to work for her. Then the war came and he had to go and was two years in the trenches. Then home again, and the lady took him back in her employ. Last year she married him, to everyone's astonishment and indignation at such a mixing of classes. To-day I went to look him up and found him, with nothing but his trousers and big boots and a thin shirt on out in the rain loading a cart with straw. He knew me, and when I told him I wanted to be introduced to his wife he took me in and I found her a most interesting lady. A woman of culture who even as a young girl was in revolt against social conventions and more attached to animals than to her own species. She has travelled too and has been to India. Her father was an artist—Scotch. On the piano I saw two books, Coventry Patmore's Poems, and *Far Away and Long Ago!* They asked me to stay to lunch, but I left them to visit Arnold Forster at the Eagle's Nest. They were not at home, so back I went to the farm and said I would have lunch. Then came another car in the rain and the people said they would lunch too, so we sat down a crowd and

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cleared the place of all the provisions. When I left I was told they had a cat there which they had procured for Mr. Garstin and were waiting for an opportunity of sending it to Penzance. So I took it in a basket and made some return for their hospitality.

*Saturday morning, December 10th.*

I wrote last night before going to bed and see I forgot to state in reference to the sun theory of Migration – which is stated fully by Benjamin Kidd in his last (and posthumous) book, and *he* appears to think it wholly his own – that the idea is implicit in all migration of birds theories. The sun is light and heat, i.e. *life*, and naturally you follow the retreating sun when cold and darkness threaten with death. Nothing more sweetly simple can be imagined. Well, that's that.

And now about *Somerset Neighbours*. I've read 2 or 3 sketches. The best one is 'Louisa Knibb's Heritage,' which I read a short time ago in a magazine, I don't know which.

And now comes the real object of my adding to my scrawl. Will you give me back your copy of *Afoot in England*? I promise you to return you another by and by, but I want one immediately, and as my books are locked up at Tower House I can't get at my own. If I fail to get one soon I will give you mine when I return. The thing is this. Knopf has arranged to publish the book in Spring and has failed to get a copy in America after advertising for one during the last six months. I, on my part, have advertised for one through *three* different book-sellers and not one of them can get a copy. So it is wanted at once,

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and if you can't give me yours I must appeal to some other friend — perhaps the Ranee would give me her copy. But if you can give me yours please post it to me at once as there is little time to get it to America in time for the Spring season.

With love to you both,  
Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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LONDON,

*December, 1921.*

DEAR HUDSON,

Here are some notes and rough suggestions I've made on migration of which I know nothing.

In considering the migration of birds, I think it might be possible to say we have to look upon the matter purely from the point of view of enforced behaviour of a group animal acting under the cumulative effect of various stimuli. Undoubtedly the psychology of birds when gathered together is that of a crowd and follows the line of least resistance indicated by their instincts as stimulated. We may first consider what the internal stimuli are. The first is obviously the state of nutrition. Since migration commences towards the end of summer, or the end of the time in which food has been most abundant, they are naturally as well nourished as they can be and ready for any usual or unusual effort. As the food on which they depend tends as a general rule to diminish henceforth, it is easy to imagine that the first sign of any coming rarity

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in their food is one of the first signals for departure, unloosing the energy of which they possess a full store. Thus energy, and nutrition the source of energy, are stimuli depending one on the other, which would naturally impel them under normal circumstances, even if migration was not the question, to seek fresh pastures. We cannot properly treat of migration without regarding it as a slowly acquired habit, one which was probably enforced by the very bitterest penalties and an immense destruction yearly of those without sufficient energy or adaptability to seek other fields of life. This probably means that birds were not migratory at first and only acquired it gradually when driven from their more natural habitat. If such is the case it is very easy to imagine that a particular stage of accumulated energy is part of the normal mechanism of any migration. This call of migration is undoubtedly related to the fissiparous stimuli affecting all social animals when a certain number inconveniently large for the means of subsistence are gathered together. When such swarming or partial migration took place only those survived who changed the climate for a more genial one where food was abundant, while those who went east or west died out or gained new specific forms. It is not difficult to understand that it is the very nature of migrant birds to go north or south. Now when I say 'in the very nature' I mean that they as living organisms have learnt to move in certain directions on certain stimuli, just as lesser animals move from heat or to light, from a dark surface to a light surface or vice versa, such movements being what is known as enforced or tropistic behaviour. They can't in fact act otherwise.

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Now the external stimuli which may affect birds and indeed must affect them on these lines are first the temperature, secondly the barometric pressure, thirdly the wind, fourthly the length of the day or night and fifthly the sun's altitude. It may be possible to find other definite stimuli of this nature, but I can't think of them at the moment. A fall of temperature coincident with any indication of more activity needed in obtaining food would obviously influence animals to move instinctively upon a line of least resistance leading to a better climate. To what extent barometric pressure might be a stimulus it would need great observation to ascertain, but since the end of summer is usually associated with a falling barometer in which flight is probably more difficult to birds, this also would act as a stimulus moving them towards a barometric system of high pressure. It is at the period of the oncoming of autumn that winds arise predominantly from the north or the south according to the hemisphere. It is to be noted that migration does not take place as a rule at the time of the Equinox when the winds are probably strong westerly ones since the weather is then warm, but that it takes place during the period of greater calm when light airs which are chilly tend to come from a high barometric pressure area in the north or south. As regards the length of the day and night it is perfectly obvious that those birds which feed by day would find their feeding time shortened as food became more scanty. Those who feed at nights might have longer nights but so far as I am aware birds that feed at night are not always migrant. This is a point on which I know practically nothing. When conditions enforce behaviour we have to consider

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that some stimulus or lack of it that may seem totally unimportant to an observer may be just as effective as something which seems perfectly obvious as a motor power. It therefore seems to me that the sun's altitude may also be a direct factor in the movements of birds predominantly towards the sun. Such a remark, whether true or not, leads directly to considering the question of direction. It is stated by some observers that birds by day or night when migrating have been observed almost invariably flying in the direction of the magnetic north or south. To what extent they can be influenced by terrestrial magnetism is obviously a very fine point, but on consideration I see no reason to doubt the possibility of their having been built up during the long evolution on such physical lines as answer to stimulation of such a kind. It is, however, worthy of notice that since their course is and must be predominantly towards the sun they would in the northern hemisphere on an average tend to go south. I am not aware whether it has ever been observed that birds in the northern hemisphere when migrating during daytime tend to move rather south-east than south in the morning and in the afternoon rather south-west than south. If this was seen to be the case on several occasions it would certainly suggest that the position of the sun was a definite factor in the birds' navigation. I should however imagine that such a varied course taken by migrating birds would only be adopted by those of rather feeble migrant habits. Such as have practised migration for thousands of generations might certainly have learnt to fly unconsciously on magnetic lines.

As regards the case of birds that pass through the  
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tropics and migrate far north or south, one can only imagine that this is the result of an instinct which grew up by birds migrating inside the tropics to the north and south and gradually extending their range of latitude.

Well, that's that as you say and if it is all rot put it in the waste-paper basket.

Yours ever,

M. R.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 21st, 1921.*

Your letter on migration received. 'Tis well you had it typed, since your handwriting has got so small it is difficult for an unpractised person to read. I'm pleased to have your considered view of the Sun-theory, as seen through tropism and the habits of *Convoluta*. Anyhow I had already rejected it along with all the others — your and others from the 17th century downwards. Mercurius Trismegistus said a wise thing, when having written 40,000 volumes on the mysteries of Nature, he remarked that 'thinking is but an idle waste of thought.' He said that not in disgust of his own work but in reference to speculation as to the causes of phenomena with insufficient knowledge of the precise facts. When you say that, after all, the physiologist and the anatomist must be called in to get the right solution, you exaggerate their powers. Would you leave it to the physiologist with his knife to

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

find the secret of the marvellous social systems and institutions of the ant? No, no!

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

An answer to another letter in which the main point suggested was that all those who deal with the biological sciences should study the question together. A more rapid advance in science would follow if men of science dropped to some extent their custom of working in their own corner and ignoring the work of others. It seems highly improbable that any Field-Naturalist, however learned, will produce a theory of migration which will hold water.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*December 28th, 1921.*

MY DEAR MORLEY,

Much vexed with tropisms, Mercurius Trismegistus, and small and very bad handwriting. As to the last I am like that man described by Lord Chesterfield in one of his delicious and ironical letters to that son of his who never could be airy and graceful and beautiful like his charming parent, — the man who wrote in any hand he pleased. He, Chesterfield, has it — IN ANY HAND HE PLEASES. As to Mercurius Trismegistus or Hermes or Sanconiathon, he is, we say, a myth — a mythical being, but to me he is as real as Shakespear about whom we know little, or Pythagoras about whom we know still less. That he wrote 40,000 books is probably an

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exaggeration but that he wrote a great many books is doubtless as true as that Sappho and Euripides and many another great genius produced works which have perished utterly. But some of their works and some fragments have survived and so we do not call them mythical beings. In the case of Hermes we have nothing but tradition to go on since the many wise and beautiful sayings attributed to him are found in other and later writers and their authenticity is quite naturally disputed by the learned. Philo or somebody invented them and we need not trouble to consider whether or not he was capable of inventing them. One need not go back 8 or 9 centuries B.C. to find instances of a like kind. If Roger Bacon's MSS. had not survived till now, he too would have been a mythical being to us. But I keep to my belief that the wisdom of the Egyptians had its fountain and source in the marvellous genius of one man, who, as tradition says, lived to a great age and produced an enormous body of work. And that's that.

And now about migration. I have looked again at your two letters about it, and would be able to see it better if you had put the two into one and left out all references to a supposed magnetic theory, and all questions as to the actual facts of migration and other questions you are not concerned with. The trouble is you pour out such a torrent of questions and suggestions that I am half drowned and don't know how to deal with them. But if you could deal with the subject, as you mostly do, solely as a theory you have independently arrived at, your tropistical theory, based on what you know of migration, that it is simply a north and south movement of birds on the earth; then I

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should like to have it and I think it would do very well to put in my chapter — a preliminary one, containing a historical note of all the theories of migration known to me — all of which I dismiss as unsatisfactory. I could insert your views at the end of the survey, as the independent opinion or theory of the author of *Warfare in the Human Body*, who is an original thinker on many biological questions. If you would care to do that I would return the two letters or papers to refresh your memory as to what you have said. It does not seem to me that any addition is wanted but that a good deal can be taken away so as to leave your tropism idea plainly and simply.

Raining here every day all the time: but very mild. Even sitting with the window open it is very warm in the room. I spent Xmas day alone — very pleased to do so. But now I think I must drag this scrawl out still more — even another sheet just to tell you of the one glimpse I had of Xmas as others are keeping it. On Xmas Eve I went to afternoon tea at a Mr. Bailey's house, a nice old fellow I know who lives with a nice wife and daughter whose husband was killed in the war, and her boys. I found the house in an uproar — a welter of Xmas preparations and everyone — guests staying in the house included — engaged in making the reception rooms gorgeous with Japanese ornaments, lanterns and what not. One of the guests, a Brigadier General, anxious to make himself useful, mounted the steps in the dining-room and balancing a very tall slim body on the top, was trying to fasten some ornaments to the ceiling, all the boys round and shouting directions and the whole room like a bear-garden. 'Is he not a brick?' shouted Mr. Bailey, pointing to the General.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

'I don't know about a brick,' said the General, 'but I feel like an acrobat up here.'

'Then,' said I, 'you are an acro-brick-bat.'

He never smiled: he paused in his work, hammer in hand, and slowly repeated two or three times – 'an acro-brickbat,' then went on with his job. It was as if he was not sure whether he liked the word or not, and thought it was perhaps a swear word. I had some talk with him afterwards and found that he was interested in animals, but didn't discover if he possessed a sense of humour. A Cornishman is always puzzled by a joke or pun of any kind and resents it. And probably he was a Cornishman. I was glad to get out of the house and hoped I wouldn't stumble into another one when a lot of boys back for the holidays are in possession of the place. To-day or to-morrow I'll try to send you some cream. With love to both,

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

P.S. – I think I had better send you the two letters now for you to look at, and if you don't want to put the gist of the matter in one you can return them to me just as they are. If you can do as I wish, I should of course like you to repeat and emphasize your suggestion as to the impossibility of any one mind finding out the true causes of migration, and that astronomers, physiologists and men of all stems in biology and physics should be called in to consider the question from all points of view. But this suggestion should of course follow your own considered theory.

Hudson seems to have mixed the mythical Hermes Trismegistus with the equally mythical Sanconiathon,

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supposed to have been used by Philo Byblius. He had a curious passion for Trismegistus and clung to the belief that this imaginary source of the Hermetic philosophy had a corporeal existence and was of vast antiquity, although most of the writings attributed to him seem to have originated in the 3rd century and are the productions of a set of absurd religious syncretists, now only of interest to out-of-the-way students of Neo-Platonism, etc.

Hudson sent me back my letters and I did what he asked. There is a reference to what I wrote in *A Hind in Richmond Park*.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*Friday morning, January, 1922*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Sorry you are in so much trouble with bad health, sickness in the house, and all. And that's how it is with me — or has been for some time past. Often at night, lying awake from the time I stop reading till daylight appears, I wonder if I shall live to see daylight. And each morning brings me letters asking for a book, an article, a preface. Dent wants ten or twelve prefaces, and I am not going to do one. He tells me in his last letter he is 'a damnable publisher,' according to my description. But the reason of my describing him so is that people will keep on insisting and try and force me to do something when alas! I can't do anything. If I could do anything it would be the book I want to do, not playing introducer and pre-

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face-maker to others who are a million times better able to tell the reader, whatever there is to tell the reader, the thing the reader should be told. (Than I am.) This very morning brings me two books from *The New York Times*, and I am, forsooth, to write an article about them! I don't know who Holmes is, and you see that I am the last person to write a preface to a book about a country I was never within 2,000 miles of.<sup>1</sup> But your friend Vachell has lived there and knows it and has written books about it.

I have been waiting for seven or eight days for a chance of getting out for a drive, but can't feel well enough, so am compelled to stay indoors, but can't write. Several papers have had a paragraph about my 'failing health' of late — God knows who set it going. But of course it has resulted in a lot of letters from anxious inquirers and they have to be answered.

Love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

January 22nd, 1922.

DEAR ROBERTS,

There are two letters, both very long, from you, and I must make some inadequate reply. It is an advantage to have the *Ency. Brit.* on one's shelves, as you can then be learned at a moment's notice. I mean about poor old

<sup>1</sup> *The Western Avernus*, now in *The Everyman Series*.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Mercurius. You give him a lot of names but omit one — Tantus. I have spoken in my poor book of what 'Tantus taught us' without intending a play upon words. There's many things that have no real place in history that are true nevertheless: and all history seems to show that all progress results from genius, and the tradition of Egyptian wisdom and civilization and religion as coming mainly from one great mind has no doubt a good deal of truth in it. As the despised poet says:

Not to every one is given  
Strength for such sublime endeavour;  
Thus to scale the walls of Heaven,  
And to leaven with the fiery leaven  
All the hearts of men forever.

The fable of Prometheus is repeated in the tears of many and many a one, which history itself tells of.

About Migration I don't think you have a theory — you say as much. All the preliminary part of your paper is more or less on the lines of what others have thought — inherited memory, Glacial Epochs, and what not. But I shall quote, I think, your suggestion about viewing the question from different angles and so on. That's worth considering. I have been in correspondence with Henry O. Forbes, whom I've known for some time, whose book *The Wanderings of a Naturalist in an Eastern Archipelago* greatly attracted me many years ago. A book long out of print. I have persuaded Dent to get the work and consider it for *Everyman's Library* and he is doing so. And of course Forbes is very pleased as he feels sore at his book having been neglected so long. I'm glad your *Western Avernus* is

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

to be included in the series, but of course the book in its primal form will still remain in print – or at all events I hope so, as I daresay many readers who see it in the cheap form would like to get the library edition. Your last long letter is dated the 10th, you say you are doing no work and so on. That's how it is with me – I write a page or so or a little more and then feel tired, as I sleep miserably and suffer from headache and the old weakness of the heart, so don't know if I shall ever finish the book. I too read and read and have just been going through Lord Frederic Hamilton's Memoirs – three huge vols. A pleasant rattle which carries one on in spite of one's feeling that it doesn't amount to much. *The Vanished Pomps of Yesterday, The Days before Yesterday and Here, There and Everywhere*, – the title tells you what to expect. I am also reading D.'s Autobiography, probably printed only for personal friends to read. Not at all bad, as the intimate narrative of one beginning in poverty and rising by his diligence and enthusiasm to the proud position of one of the leading publishers of the world. The chief fault of the book is that there is not enough about the early life of want and poverty and striving, and then too much about the success that finally crowned it. The lives of the unsuccessful are apt to interest one more than the successful. My poor old friend Vaughan, who was vicar of Zennor when I used to stay there and who retired a year or so ago and came to live in this terrace, died yesterday, so I have lost an old friend here. But I know too many people here and every day someone comes up and greets me and I'm obliged to ask him or her who the dickens he or she is. That happened yesterday with a lady and after much talk and

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

apologies for not having called and so on, I had to ask her who she was. No use your writing to the Hartleys: I told you they had gone to the south of France for the winter and their house is shut up. I went to St. Ives last week to lunch with some people named Dhu (*sic*)<sup>1</sup> — he was an artist, now dead, and his widow who has had a rather romantic life is a nice old lady. I take *The Times* only and am following several correspondences going on with considerable interest — especially the Modernist one. I must try to send you a little cream to-morrow.

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

February 26th, 1922.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I suppose it is for the same reason I have not written and you have not written, which by the way reminds me of 'I was a child and she was a child in that kingdom by the sea.' Besides not feeling able to knock about out of doors the weather has continued wet and blowing all the time. This last week we had one fine day or morning and one not too wet a day, so on each occasion I got a car and went over to Hayle. One day I lunched with the wise ancient historico-archæological Jenner and Mrs. J. I had a long letter from a Miss Sylvia Colenso who had been

<sup>1</sup> Doo.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

writing to me about their name – which ‘she feared’ was Spanish. Old Jenner soon settled that question. Colenso is a Cornish Celtic place-name and surname, and he supposed it comes from *col*, (illegible) and *lenso*, a path or road. So Sylvia is delighted – poor dear! She is a granddaughter of the famous Bishop of Zululand who disturbed England by denying that Joshua made the sun stand still – or that Jonah swallowed the whale. The Colensos live at Amersham and have never seen Cornwall – the home of their tribe.

Yesterday my second excursion was to the Convent with a basket of grapes for the patients which I promised long ago and couldn’t buy because of their dearness. Now we have an unlimited supply of Cape grapes at a low price, so I took a lot and had a nice long chat with the Sister Superior of the Convent. I think I told you before what a nice creature she is and very nice to look at with her high Irish colour, black hair and velvet brown eyes. She said she had been thinking of me – wondering why I hadn’t given her the book I promised her – *Dead Man’s Plack*. I said it was because I had thought better of it: that it dealt with history – a dreadful time when Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury and ruler of England under the king, proclaimed the celibacy of the clergy and drove the married priests out of their livings and homes, and also was guilty of many other monstrous crimes. All the histories, I said, which told these truths were on the Index and the only English history not on the Index was Lingard’s, who of course made Dunstan a Saint. And as she would have to submit my book to Father Ryan, the head priest of the Convent, he would see what it was about and finding St.

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

Dunstan described as a criminal would forbid her reading it. She laughed and said the priests had nothing to do with her reading. She read what she liked without asking their permission and so would like to read the history of Elfrida. So I must get it for her.

A fortnight ago I had a visit from Mr. Joseph Anthony who represents the Century Publishing firm in London and runs about after British writers. He came to see if I could give him a portion of the book I am doing for *The Century Magazine* and if I would then sell the American rights to them. Of course I didn't come to any arrangement, but I am writing to the firm about it. As he only had two days here staying at the Queen's Hotel, I took him a run round the coast from St. Ives to the Land's End where we lunched, and that took most of the day. That's pretty well all the news I can think of. I have just read the much-praised *If Winter Comes*, and rather liked the first half of the book, and thought the rest of it hideously bad. I started reading *Where the Pavement Ends* and gave it up — I don't care for such crude brutality. I have also read *Alone* by Norman Douglas and like it and dislike it at the same time. I am going to read Hewlett's *Wiltshire Essays* and What's-his-name's *The Devil and a Long Spoon* which they say is rather good. I haven't had a word from Hartley yet so don't suppose they are back.

Then as for work. You say you write half an hour. Well, perhaps you get over more ground in that time than I do between breakfast and lunch, when I sit over my stuff. I've been going over and re-writing some chapters of *A Hind in Richmond Park*, but it is not finished yet

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

The trouble is there is no real or natural or proper end to a thing of that kind and I shall simply break off when it gets to 80 or 90,000 words. I wish I could hear Keith's lectures.

I will send on some cream when I next get to the bottom of Market Jew St.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*April 9th, 1922.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I should very much like to see that symposium when it is printed. Hippocrates and Menenius Agrippa might be easily managed, but you had better take a long think over Hobbes before putting yourself inside him. Otherwise it might not sound convincing. I don't quite know what the meaning of the overgrowth of the trachea of cranes is. There are strange modifications in the trachea in several creatures both bird and mammal and they seem to have a *purpose* — they in some way enable the creature to emit such tremendous sounds. The crane has one of the most powerful and far reaching cries in birds, and the araguato or old man monkey can outroar any lion. He has an extraordinary windpipe. On the other hand there are fantastic variations in the forms of the trachea (as in the mute swan) which seem to have no purpose at all. Perhaps you'll make something out of it. I had Macrae to

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

visit me the other day — I mean E. P. Dutton's manager. He was in London for a few days and spent two of them down here, just to see me. Luckily the weather was fine and I took him to St. Ives and the Land's End one day, and to the Lizard the next. I didn't want him to come as I have nothing to do and no sense of brotherhood with pushing shrewd business men out of big cities; but I was agreeably surprised in him. He was born and bred in the blue grass mountain region of Virginia and spent his boyhood and youth breaking colts and shooting wild turkeys and all sorts of adventures. He knows more about nature than books, much as he is in the publishing world. Of course he wanted to get the book I'm doing; but I had half promised to let the Century Co. use a portion of it in *The Century Magazine*, and they too want the book afterwards. But I can't pull it together till it is finished, and that may take some time yet. I had to do 4 chapters on migration as the subject was a long one, and most of the other chapters have been altered and developed.

The Ranee is at Lelant and I see her frequently. Also some other people I know have dropped in to see me, and I know the Arnold Forsters who have the Eagle's Nest out at Zennor. He has just sent his year's work in pictures to London for a one man show in Regent St. Poor B — girls! I thought, or hoped, the younger one would have married. I haven't heard of Hartley's arrival, but was told by the Ranee some days ago that they were about to come. Will try to send a pot of cream to-morrow.

With love to both,

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*April 16th, 1922.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

His name is John – Honest John, but you needn't put that in addressing him. Simply John Macrae. He is good to know but it is hard to get a letter out of him. . . .

There's a good deal hard to understand in your second sheet about out-of-place hair and so on, but why do you underline your words about sexual selection, offering a different explanation from Darwin's about brilliance of colour, etc. in the male bird? It is an old objection to Darwin's theory which Wallace made (I adopted it in the end chapter on Music and Dancing in Birds in the *Nat. in La Plata*). The superabundant energy in the male which made him splendid also gave him a greater power to win the female. When the female is left to make her own choice it falls as often as not on the poorest specimen. I wonder if the extravagant trachea in the bittern has 'been made use of' to give it its booming voice? Or if these queer forms in bird tracheas have anything to do with voice? The Plantcutter of Patagonia certainly differs in voice from all other small birds. He emits *bleating* sounds. The two ducks I know with abnormal tracheas make *droning* sounds only. They haven't a quack in them and the quack-quack is the *family* sound in all ducks. There is another curious development in birds which does tell on the voice and which might come into your survey, and that is the air-places in head and throat in the 'chambers of resonance'

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

as Gilbert White called it in the pigeons, who seem to fill their gullets with air to make their deep sounds. Also in the Bustard, the Pinnated Grouse of North America, which puffs out its neck appendages and the Bell Bird of South America when the long pendulous ornament on its head becomes inflated with air when he utters his principal tolling or clanging note. Also the Jabiru, the giant stork of S. America that puffs out all the naked warty skin of head and neck, and many others. But there's no need to term such abnormalities — if it pleases us to call them so — adaptations, if excrescences and things that are wrong serve some useful purpose in the animal's life.

I can tell you about Helmsley as I have known Lady H. several years. . . . She is a lover of the poor and extremely active and practical in her way of helping them. I asked her on Friday, when I had a drive with her and then brought her over here to tea, how she came to start the *Crèche* business. She said that in her visits to the Islington slums some years ago she found a poor sickly woman in charge of 20 or 30 babies and small children in one poor miserable room — the children of young mothers who worked in factories who gave them in her charge for a pittance for the day. This poor woman turned upon her and said, 'Why can't one of you rich ladies from the West End who come among us do something like this for the little ones and their mothers who have to leave them every day to go to work?' She took the hint and had a big room built at her own expense, appointed a nurse, and in a little had 40 or 50 children to look after every day except Sunday. It proved so suc-

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

cessful that others were started all about London — we had three in the Latymer Rd. district in Kensington. And it was also taken up in all the big industrial towns all over England. She is still engaged in it herself and is patroness to three or four crêches in different parts. The money the women pay brings in one third of the cost of running the Crêches: the rest has to come from voluntary contributions, and she is always collecting money from people in Society to help. I admire her for this work and also pity her very much. She married, when young and pretty, Lord Helmsley, the son and heir of Lord Feversham, and had a son and daughter. Her husband died as Lord Helmsley, then her daughter died, then her son who had succeeded to his grandfather's title was killed in the war. She married a second time and her husband, a country gentleman, also died, so she has been left pretty well alone to finish her life, and I suppose she makes it tolerable by hard work for others. Massingham has compiled an anthology of bird poems and wants me to write a preface! I must tell him I can't do it unless I'm allowed to abuse all anthologists, especially those about birds and bird poems.

*The Century Magazine* will, I believe, use the first 8 chapters of my *Hind* as a serial. They want more, but I don't want to give more than eight as the most interesting part of the book begins after the first eight, and I would prefer it to come out first as a book. At present I'm struggling over the origin of music.

I hope you are better by now,

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

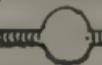
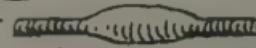
# MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

April 22nd, 1922.

DEAR ROBERTS,

If you are going into the subject of bird tracheas you've got your work cut out for you. I know nothing about it but remember that it all seemed very funny and inexplicable. The mute swan is the common bird — *Cygnus olor*. It has an extraordinary wind-pipe. We have a duck in S. America *Peposaca metaponiana*,<sup>1</sup> or something like that, with a globular process in the middle of the trachea — like this — . Then, we have a teal with its trachea like this — 

In Patagonia we have a small bird called the Plant-cutter which has many convolutions in its trachea. I remember when I first came to London Dr. Garrod, the son of the Harley St. gout specialist, showed me a specimen he had preserved and wanted me to get others for him. He said it was the strangest of all the strange bird tracheas: and bird anatomy was his special science. The form of the trachea in all these species has done nothing for the voice; but in the bittern it may be that it has. The best way to get at the facts (or a few of them) about bird tracheas would be to go to the Zoological offices and ask Chalmers Mitchell to get the Librarian to help

<sup>1</sup> *Metaponiana Peposaca*: Rosy-billed Duck. v. *Argentine Ornithology*, Vol. II. p. 137.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

you find some records. They are in the publications of the Society and a dozen other Societies. Millions of volumes! It is hard to find one's way about in such a forest. And you talk of going in for malformations generally! Good Lord — where do you draw the line between malformations and a thousand excrescences which might be sexual ornaments or anything a scientist of imagination cares to make them? Just consider the number of species of birds with naked heads and necks covered with great warts! Can they be ornaments? If so the females must have had an inverted sort of aestheticism and always selected the ugliest bird going for a mate. A Darwinian would say offhand, I suppose, that a long tuft of coarse hair on the turkey's cockles on his breast is a sexual ornament of the males. But is it? And is it pathological? I can believe either explanation. It is hair right enough — such hair as a horse has in his tail. And it is not the only hair to be found in birds. You find true hair scattered over the body of some kinds when you pluck them. How came they there? It looks as if Nature — the hesitator and blunderer — was in two minds about clothing her reptiles when she raised them to birds, and didn't know whether to turn scales into hair or feathers. But there's no end to what you call malformations.

I suppose you know that Macrae is the one and sole ruler of E. P. Dutton. He, Dutton, is very old and does nothing in the business. Macrae does what he likes and what he does is great and noble and generous. He gave me an example. Ibanez, he said, was a bad seller in America, and he sent Dutton his *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, and said he wanted to sell the American

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

rights straight off for money down, and he asked 300 dollars. Macrae replied that he would give him a royalty, since, if the book sold, it would be vastly better for him. Ibanez replied that he wanted no royalties and if Dutton declined to take the book for 300 dollars down he would send it to another publisher. Macrae then sent him the 300. Presently the book began to go like hot cakes after a while. Macrae wrote to Ibanez and told him he had torn up the agreement giving the American rights and would now pay a royalty. He enclosed 2500 dollars on account. Then the book was filmed and Ibanez made a fortune out of it. I said he had done a very noble thing — one I should not have expected of a publisher. About *Warfare in the Human Body* he told me he had read it with profound interest; and when I asked him mockingly if he had understood a single page of it he said he had not understood it all but was so impressed with it that he was glad to publish it and took care to send copies to 17 of the foremost men in the physiological and biological world in America. But if you expect any money from the sales you will probably have to wait two years before hearing anything about it. I posted you a little cream yesterday morning. In the afternoon the Ranee and Lady Helmsley turned up to tea. . . .

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*April 25th, 1922.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

I forgot to refer to the question of the Wallace idea about Darwin's sexual selection theory when I wrote. That criticism of Wallace has never been accepted or much noticed and if you have an opportunity of pushing it forwards I hope you will not miss it. And it would be all the stronger if you can say that you have come independently to the same conclusion purely from a consideration of the waste of energy and the overplus of energy. Most certainly it is this overplus which has created the marvellously brilliant and fantastic plumage and ornament in so many birds — always in those most abounding in energy — such as the various species of birds of paradise and the humming birds. Their glittering plumage and rainbow tints and strange ornaments were never wanted in mate-getting. Thousands of weaker species keep their plain colours and have no difficulty in getting partners. The Cock-of-the-Rock is one of the most splendid birds in its brilliant scarlet plumage and crest, and manifests its splendid energy in its dancing performances as well as in its colour. The birds meet in numbers together and surround the performer who dances his wild fantastic dance, then retires and a second bird steps into the arena and then a third and so on, all the others, males and females, quietly looking on and enjoying it. So it is with all the birds that have these displays known to me — the great rail, the jacana and others. All meet together

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

and have a grand display — dancing, exhibiting their brilliant colours and screaming together: then they all quietly separate. The great rail — Ypecaha — continues these performances pretty well all the year round, except when moulting, after breeding, when they rest.

For the last 4 or 5 days I've done nothing, feeling very weak. Lady Helmsley has departed. I told her of your application for a fishing permit at Helmsley which was refused. She was most indignant and wondered how whoever had refused you permission had dared to do so as they never refuse it. But none of the family are ever at the mansion, which is too big to let so it remains shut up. She lives in London. Her daughter-in-law is married and the two boys, her grandsons — one Earl of Faversham — are at school.

Love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,

*April 27th, 1922.*

That cutting you sent about birds of Paradise is not new — we had it all over a year ago. The Plumage Merchants succeeded first in getting the French naturalists to testify that the osprey was the *shed* plumage of the egret. They also succeeded apparently in getting our English collectors to testify that the adult plumage of the bird of Paradise is a *token of senility*, and the bird should therefore be shot (like a rogue elephant) for the good of

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

the race and incidentally to defeat the anti-plumage legislation. Those German-Jew scoundrels have spent many thousands in bribing right and left, and I fear some of our leading Zoologists pocketed some of the gold.

W. H. H.

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23 NORTH PARADE, PENZANCE,  
*May 18th, 1922.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

Yours came late to-day — too late for the last post to London and I don't know why a London letter doesn't come always by the morning delivery. I hope you will be able to go away. No doubt the trouble is that you have had too long a spell of intense thinking without a break. I suppose if I thought intensely I should have been dead ages ago. My mind works slowly — slowly. And that's best in a way. Chi va piano va sano, chi va sano va lontano. I have never gone sano but because I've gone piano I seem to have gone lontano. I don't know when I shall go back as I am most anxious to get the book done or nearly so without making a break. It is long enough now, but doesn't come to an end, the subject I am on at present being instrumental music in animal and man — a subject for two chapters and they are nigh done. They follow vocal music. And nothing remains to write — nothing that is to say that rises naturally out of the subject in hand. Unless I venture to state my ideas about art generally: which artistic souls would

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

probably call either madness or the impertinence of an ignorant Philistine. Well, some say things like that about Ruskin and *his* ideas about art, and some say as bad about old Tolstoi. That would be pretty good company. I may return about the first week in June. My health is about as bad as usual and can't but be bad as I can't get enough exercise to keep me in a decent state. I have to get a car and take a drive instead of a walk. The Ranee of Sarawak is leaving next Wednesday. I'm sorry as her company is or has been of some value.

With love to both,  
Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*Saturday evening, June 25th, 1922.*

DEAR ROBERTS,

If you cared to publish your treatise just now there would be no fear of any loss, as there is so much being said on cancer problems, and the alarming increase which goes steadily on, that thousands of people are profoundly interested in the subject, and a book throwing any fresh light on it would sell well just now. And if a short book all the better as it would not be so expensive as the usual scientific works which are mostly very long. However, do as you think best: only you have to consider that when the time comes to lecture you may not have the proper health and vigour for such an exertion. It must

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## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

take it out of one, especially if the lecture is followed by a discussion by keen critical listeners. My idea would be to bring the book out as soon as possible.

I fear I can't make any lunching engagement as I have accepted several invitations for the week. Monday I have to meet Garnett and perhaps some one else in the evening, I have also to go to the Strand that day. Next day either Massingham or Dr. Parson, the director of the Audubon Societies, and the other on Wednesday. You must not come in the evening to see me: it would be a risk in your present state and in this very trying weather. I have too much to do to-day to attend to the post so have not sent the book yet. I'll send it on Monday.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

P.S.—I have just been reading Garnett's *Friday Nights*—a book of literary critiques, mostly rather old stuff, about W. H. Hudson, Ibsen, Tolstoi and a lot of others.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,  
Saturday, July, 1922.

DEAR ROBERTS,

Yours just received and am glad you are getting better: but don't send cream: I get all I want at my W. W. luncheons. I went yesterday by appointment to see Dr. Price and had an hour or more with him. A

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## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

curious man who seems to take no interest in anything but the organ he studies. He was in a jolly mood and said I was just as before and made no difference in the treatment. His fee this time was 3 guineas. Mrs. Edward Thomas has collected some of the tales and sketches by her husband and wants me to write a preface. I have a proof of the book — a rather slim affair — and must try to do it as he was a friend and most lovable fellow. And was killed. I suppose the wide landscape has reacted on you and made your handwriting larger and the spaces between words and lines wider. It is a welcome change. But you don't say how long you are going to stay. I hope you will take a good time as it is just what you want, to be away from books and everlasting problems until nature has had time to restore you to a quieter state of mind — the mood in which one can take up a problem in pathology or anything else and treat it as one would a chair to mend or a pipe to be cleaned against the next smoke. I have to add something to the book I have sent to Dent and to Dutton, having settled with both, as it ends too abruptly — and there is a difficulty in front of me. I hope you will have better weather now: here it rained all last night but now it looks promising again.

With love to both,

W. H. HUDSON.

P.S. — Mrs. Thomas comes up from Oxford to see me next Wednesday and I shall try to get away the day following — either to Ascot or Brighton and Worthing. But letters will be sent on as usual.

## LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

August 2nd, 1922.

DEAR ROBERTS,

I had 2 or 3 words on a p.c. from you the other day and did not reply at once as I was half-mad with my anxiety to finish what I was doing before getting out of town. I didn't want to add anything to the book but it appears I must do it – for both Dent's and my own satisfaction, and so I've had to go into the infernal question of the meaning of art generally – its origin and meaning. To artists and artistic persons it will seem a madness but I don't care a 'single dam,' as Marjorie Fleming would say, what anyone thinks, so long as I can in brief space make my meaning plain. And as soon as I get it done I want to send a copy to you to read – not for you to tell me to modify anything but to see that I do make myself understood. It will be a single chapter – an outline of a very long subject and question.

The weather is still very strange for summer – to-day is rather wintry. And the rain it raineth every day, as W. S. says, with a 'hey ho and nonny.' I dare say it is a nuisance at Exmoor when you want to be out of doors nearly all the time. Still if you are getting stronger it is better you should stay as long as possible and in September I shall be back I hope. I am just reading *This Freedom* which is being advertised in a disgusting way with placards and photos all over the place. It is rather amusing but a pamphlet rather than a novel I fancy. Yesterday the Ranee came to see me – my first sight of her

## MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS

since I was in Penzance. The Rothensteins, my nearest neighbours where I often go to tea, have gone for a holiday to the Continent. I lunched with Garnett yesterday, and as I go nowhere have seen no one else except Col. Lawrence. . . . I hope Naomi is finding some enjoyment, other than fishing.

With love to both,  
Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

August 7th, 1922.

DEAR ROBERTS,

The woman who writes this letter (enclosed) is of course in a muddle like everybody else. But when Mrs. Rothenstein described the case to me and repeated what the doctor said as to the *cause* of the trouble being the thyroid gland, I said it was probably myxoedema<sup>1</sup> the girl had, and that I did not know of any doctor who could be consulted about it. Now the mother writes this letter and I want you to let me know out of your extensive knowledge of doctors, the best all-round physician she can go to, and I will send her to him with a letter just stating what she was told at the nerve hospital. They are poor people and the mother, whose husband was killed in the war, has to earn her living.

Yours ever,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> The case was one of Graves' Disease.

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

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40 ST. LUKE'S ROAD, W.II,

*August 16th, 1922.<sup>1</sup>*

Wednesday. I can't meet you this week as I am ill in bed since Sunday and even if I get up I shall not come out of the house this week.

Yours,

W. H. HUDSON.

<sup>1</sup> Hudson's last card. See *W. H. Hudson, A Portrait*, p. 311.



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## 93. A POOR MAN'S HOUSE

by Stephen Reynolds

¶ Vivid and intimate pictures of a Devonshire fisherman's life. 'Compact, harmonious, without a single—I won't say false—but uncertain note, true in aim, sentiment and expression, precise and imaginative, never precious, but containing here and there an absolutely priceless phrase. . . .' *Joseph Conrad*

## 94. WILLIAM BLAKE

by Arthur Symons

¶ When Blake spoke the first word of the nineteenth century there was none to hear it; and now that his message has penetrated the world, and is slowly re-making it, few are conscious of the man who first voiced it. This lack of knowledge is remedied in Mr. Symons' work.

## 95. A LITERARY PILGRIM IN ENGLAND

by Edward Thomas

¶ A book about the homes and resorts of English writers, from John Aubrey, Cowper, Gilbert White, Cobbett, Wordsworth, Burns, Borrow and Lamb, to Swinburne, Stevenson, Meredith, W. H. Hudson and H. Belloc. Each chapter is a miniature biography and at the same time a picture of the man and his work and environment.

## 96. NAPOLEON : THE LAST PHASE

by The Earl of Rosebery

¶ Of books and memoirs about Napoleon there is indeed no end, but of the veracious books such as this there are remarkably few. It aims to penetrate the deliberate darkness which surrounds the last act of the Napoleonic drama.

97. THE POCKET BOOK OF POEMS AND  
SONGS FOR THE OPEN AIR  
Compiled by Edward Thomas

¶ This anthology is meant to please those lovers of poetry and the country who like a book that can always lighten some of their burdens or give wings to their delight, whether in the open air by day, or under the roof at evening ; in it is gathered much of the finest English poetry.

98. SAFETY PINS : ESSAYS

by Christopher Morley

With an Introduction by H. M. TOMLINSON

¶ Very many readers will be glad of the opportunity to meet Mr. Morley in the rôle of the gentle essayist. He is an author who is content to move among his fellows, to note, to reflect, and to write genially and urbanely ; to love words for their sound as well as for their value in expression of thought.

99. THE BLACK SOUL : A Novel

by Liam O'Flaherty

¶ 'The Black Soul overwhelms one like a storm. . . . Nothing like it has been written by any Irish writer.' "Æ" in *The Irish Statesman*

100. CHRISTINA ALBERTA'S FATHER :

A Novel

by H. G. Wells

¶ 'At first reading the book is utterly beyond criticism ; all the characters are delightfully genuine.' *Spectator*

'Brimming over with Wellsian insight, humour and invention. No one but Mr. Wells could have written the whole book and given it such verve and sparkle.' *Westminster Gazette*

102. THE GRUB STREET NIGHTS  
ENTERTAINMENTS

by J. C. Squire

¶ Stories of literary life, told with a breath of fantasy and gaily ironic humour. Each character lives, and is the more lively for its touch of caricature. From *The Man Who Kept a Diary* to *The Man Who Wrote Free Verse*, these tales constitute Mr. Squire's most delightful ventures in fiction ; and the conception of the book itself is unique.

### 103. ORIENTAL ENCOUNTERS

by Marmaduke Pickthall

¶ In *Oriental Encounters*, Mr. Pickthall relives his earlier manhood's discovery of Arabia and sympathetic encounters with the Eastern mind. He is one of the few travellers who really bridges the racial gulf.

### 105. THE MOTHER : A Novel

by Grazia Deledda

With an introduction by D. H. LAWRENCE

¶ An unusual book, both in its story and its setting in a remote Sardinian hill village, half civilized and superstitious. The action of the story takes place so rapidly and the actual drama is so interwoven with the mental conflict, and all so forced by circumstances, that it is almost Greek in its simple and inevitable tragedy.

### 106. TRAVELLER'S JOY : An Anthology

by W. G. Waters

¶ This anthology has been selected for publication in the Travellers' Library from among the many collections of verse because of its suitability for the traveller, particularly the summer and autumn traveller, who would like to carry with him some store of literary provender.

### 107. SHIPMATES : Essays

by Felix Riesenber

¶ A collection of intimate character portraits of men with whom the author has sailed on many voyages. The sequence of studies blends into a fascinating panorama of living characters.

### 108. THE CRICKET MATCH

by Hugh de Selincourt

¶ Through the medium of a cricket match the author endeavours to give a glimpse of life in a Sussex village. First we have a bird's-eye view at dawn of the village nestling under the Downs; then we see the players awaken in all the widely different circumstance of their various lives, pass the morning, assemble on the field, play their game, united for a few hours, as men should be, by a common purpose—and at night disperse.

## **109. RARE ADVENTURES AND PAINFULL PEREGRINATIONS (1582-1645)**

by William Lithgow

Edited, and with an Introduction by B. I. LAWRENCE

¶ This is the book of a seventeenth-century Scotchman who walked over the Levant, North Africa and most of Europe, including Spain, where he was tortured by the Inquisition. An unscrupulous man, full of curiosity, his comments are diverting and penetrating, his adventures remarkable.

## **110. THE END OF A CHAPTER**

by Shane Leslie

¶ In this, his most famous book, Mr. Shane Leslie has preserved for future generations the essence of the pre-war epoch, its institutions and individuals. He writes of Eton, of the Empire, of Post-Victorianism, of the Politicians. . . . And whatever he touches upon, he brilliantly interprets.

## **111. SAILING ACROSS EUROPE**

by Negley Farson

With an Introduction by FRANK MORLEY

¶ A voyage of six months in a ship, its one and only cabin measuring 8 feet by 6 feet, up the Rhine, down the Danube, passing from one to the other by the half-forgotten Ludwig's Canal. To think of and plan such a journey was a fine imaginative effort and to write about it interestingly is no mean accomplishment.

## **112. MEN, BOOKS AND BIRDS—Letters to a friend**

by W. H. Hudson

With Notes, some Letters, and an Introduction by MORLEY ROBERTS

¶ An important collection of letters from the naturalist to his friend, literary executor and fellow-author, Morley Roberts, covering a period of twenty-five years.

## **113. PLAYS ACTING AND MUSIC**

by Arthur Symons

¶ This book deals mainly with music and with the various arts of the stage. Mr. Arthur Symons shows how each art has its own laws, its own limits; these it is the business of the critic jealously to distinguish. Yet in the study of art as art, it should be his endeavour to master the universal science of beauty.

## 114. ITALIAN BACKGROUNDS

by Edith Wharton

¶ Mrs. Wharton's perception of beauty and her grace of writing are matters of general acceptance. Her book gives us pictures of mountains and rivers, monks, nuns and saints.

## 115. FLOWERS AND ELEPHANTS

by Constance Sitwell. With an Introduction by  
E. M. Forster

¶ Mrs. Sitwell has known India well, and has filled her pages with many vivid little pictures, and with sounds and scents. But it is the thread on which her impressions are strung that is so fascinating, a thread so delicate and rare that the slightest clumsiness in definition would snap it.

## 116. THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES: and Other Plays of the Sea

by Eugene O'Neill. With an Introduction by St.  
John Ervine

¶ 'Mr. O'Neill is immeasurably the most interesting man of letters that America has produced since the death of Walt Whitman.' *From the Introduction.*

## 117. BETWEEN EARTH AND SKY. Stories of Gypsies

by Konrad Bercovici. With an Introduction by  
A. E. Coppard

¶ Konrad Bercovici, through his own association with gipsies, together with a magical intuition of their lives, is able to give us some unforgettable pictures of those wanderers who, having no home anywhere, are at home everywhere.

## 118. THE HOUSE WITH THE GREEN SHUTTERS

by George Douglas. With an Introduction by  
J. B. Priestley

¶ This powerful and moving story of life in a small Scots burgh is one of the grimdest studies of realism in all modern fiction. The author flashes a cold and remorseless searchlight upon the backbitings, jealousies, and intrigues of the townsfolk, and his story stands as a classic antidote to the sentimentalism of the kailyard school.

## 119. FRIDAY NIGHTS

by Edward Garnett

¶ Of *Friday Nights* a *Times* reviewer wrote: ‘Mr. Garnett is “the critic as artist,” sensitive alike to elemental nature and the subtlest human variations. His book sketches for us the possible outlines of a new humanism, a fresh valuation of both life and art.’

## 120. DIVERSIONS IN SICILY

by Henry Festing Jones

¶ Shortly before his sudden and unexpected death, Mr. Festing Jones chose out *Diversions in Sicily* for reprinting in the Travellers’ Library from among his three books of mainly Sicilian sketches and studies. The publishers hope that the book, in this popular form, will make many new friends. These chapters, as well as any that he wrote, recapture the wisdom, charm, and humour of their author.

## 121. DAYS IN THE SUN: A Cricketer’s Book.

by Neville Cardus (*Cricketer* of the *Manchester Guardian*).

¶ These sketches were first published in *A Cricketer’s Book* (1922) and in *Days in the Sun* (1924), they have now been revised for re-issue in *The Travellers’ Library*. The author says ‘the intention of this book is modest – it should be taken as a rather freely compiled journal of happy experiences which have come my way on our cricket fields.’

## 122. COMBED OUT

by F. A. Voigt

¶ This account of life in the army in 1917–18 both at home and in France is written with a telling incisiveness. The author does not indulge in an unnecessary word, but packs in just the right details with an intensity of feeling that is infectious.

## 123. CONTEMPORARIES OF MARCO POLO

edited by Manuel Komroff

¶ This volume comprises the Travel Records in the Eastern parts of the world of William of Rubruck (1253-1255), the Journey of John of Pian de Carpine (1245-1247), the Journey of Friar Odoric (1318-1330), the Oriental Travels of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela (1160-1173). They describe the marvels and wonders of Asia under the Khans.

## 124. TENNYSON

by Hugh I'Anson Fausset

¶ Mr. Fausset speaks of Tennyson on his deathbed as 'the monument of the conscience and the poetry of more than half a century,' and his study of his qualities as poet, man, and moralist is by implication a study of some of the predominant characteristics of the Victorian age. His book, however, is as pictorial as it is critical, being woven, to quote *The Times*, 'like an arras of delicate colour and imagery.' It has been revised for issue in 'the Travellers' Library' and a new preface added.

## 125. CAPTIVES OF TIPU: SURVIVORS' NARRATIVES

edited by A. W. Lawrence

¶ Three records of heroic endurance, which were hitherto unobtainable at a reasonable price. In addition to the well-known stories of Bristow and Scurry, a soldier and a seaman, who were forcibly Mohammedanized and retained in the service of Mysore till their escape after ten years, extracts are given from an officer's diary of his close imprisonment at Seringapatam.

## 126. MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-TRADER

by Theodore Canot. Set down by Brantz Mayer  
and now edited by A. W. Lawrence

¶ In 1854 a cosmopolitan adventurer, who knew Africa at the worst period of its history, dictated this sardonic account of piracy and mutiny, of battles with warships or rival traders, and of the fantastic lives of European and half-caste slavers on the West Coast.

## 127. BLACK LAUGHTER

by Llewelyn Powys. Author of *Ebony and Ivory*, etc.

¶ *Black Laughter* is a kind of *Robinson Crusoe* of the continent of Africa. Indeed, Llewelyn Powys resembles Daniel Defoe in the startlingly realistic manner in which he conveys the actual feelings of the wild places he describes. You actually share the sensations of a sensitive and artistic nature suddenly transplanted from a peaceful English village into the heart of Africa.

## 128. THE INFORMER

by Liam O'Flaherty. Author of *Spring Sowing*, etc.

¶ This realistic novel of the Dublin underworld is generally conceded to be Mr. O'Flaherty's most outstanding book. It is to be produced as a film by British International Pictures, who regard it as one of the most ambitious of their efforts.

## 129. THE BEADLE. A novel of South Africa by Pauline Smith. Author of *The Little Karoo*

¶ 'A story of great beauty, and told with simplicity and tenderness that makes it linger in the memory. It is a notable contribution to the literature of the day.' *Morning Post*.

## 130. FISHMONGER'S FIDDLE. Short Stories by A. E. Coppard. Author of *The Black Dog*, *Silver Circus*, etc.

¶ 'In definite colour and solid strength his work suggests that of the old Dutch Masters. Mr. Coppard is a born story-teller.' *Times Literary Supplement*.



### Note

*The Travellers' Library* is now published as a joint enterprise by Jonathan Cape Ltd. and William Heinemann Ltd. The new volumes announced here to appear during the summer of 1929 include those to be published by both firms. The series as a whole or any title in the series can be ordered through booksellers from either Jonathan Cape or William Heinemann. Booksellers' only care must be not to duplicate their orders.









